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INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Wednesday, May 3, 2006 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 144 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Opus Dei rushing paper to refute 'Da Vinci Code'

By Christian V. Esguerra

A CATHOLIC INFORMATION CENTER OPERATED by some Opus Dei members is rushing a publication to parry the perceived attack on the Christian faith in the movie "Da Vinci Code" before its release later this month.

The Theological Centrum, which disseminates information on doctrines in an attempt to help

OPUS/ A8

AIDS issue prompts Pope to review ban on condoms

ROME—EVEN IN THE VATICAN, NOT ALL SACRED beliefs are absolute: Thou shalt not kill, but war can be just.

Now, behind the Vatican's quiet walls, a clash is shaping up involving two poles of near absolute certainty—the Roman Catholic Church's long-held ban on condoms and its advocacy of human life.

The issue is AIDS. Church officials recently

AIDS/ A8

3 GMA men snub Senate

SENATORS Juan Ponce Enrile (left) and Ralph Recto fume after two Cabinet secretaries failed to show up at a Senate hearing yesterday.

ROGER MARGALLO

Enrile tells execs: 'The hell with you'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

TWO CABINET OFFICIALS and a bureau head yesterday snubbed a Senate hearing in what appeared to be a display of Malacañang's defiant stance on Executive Order No. 464.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile fumed when Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, Trade Secretary Peter Favila and Internal Revenue Commissioner Jose Buñag failed to show up at the hearing of the Senate ways and means committee chaired by Sen. Ralph Recto.

"We're not calling you [for ourselves] as Enrile and Recto. We're calling you as representatives of our people to hear from you [how to solve] the problems of the country. And if you don't want it, the hell with you!" Enrile said.

Recto wondered where the three officials were, noting that it was the first Senate hearing to be held since the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional portions of President Macapagal-Arroyo's controversial order barring gov-

3 GMA/ A6

TEVES

FAVILA

BUÑAG

Media group says GMA doesn't understand press role

By Alcuin Papa, Philip C. Tubeza and Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO does not understand or appreciate the role of press freedom in Philippine society, the Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists (FFFJ) said yesterday.

In a strongly worded statement sent to the INQUIRER ahead of World Press Freedom Day today, the group said Filipino journalists still had "reason to worry" despite the lifting of Presidential Proclamation No. 1017, which imposed a weeklong state of national emergency in February.

It said the Arroyo administration had "failed to take strong steps to stop violence against journalists and media practitioners who work in the community press," and pointed out that in 2005 alone, seven journalists were killed without any of the assailants landing in jail.

"Clearly, the actions of President Arroyo reflect her failure to understand and appreciate press freedom as a core value of Philippine society. The pressure exerted on [Probe Productions and the Philippine Center for Investiga-

MEDIA/ A23

House bent on legislating pay hike

By Michael Lim Ubac and Christine O. Avendaño

TWO KEY HOUSE LEADERS YESTERDAY said the chamber was bent on legislating a wage increase despite President Macapagal-Arroyo's statement leaving it up to the regional wage boards to decide on the workers' long-running demand for across-the-board pay hikes.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles and Rep. Roseller Barinaga of Zamboanga del Norte, chair of the House committee on labor and employment, said a wage increase was imperative to cushion the impact of surging oil prices on consumers.

Some House members appeared to favor action by the wage boards but Nograles and Barinaga were expected to play a pivotal role on the issue because of their key positions in the House.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas yesterday said that despite the prescribed one-year interval between wage hikes, the wage boards could grant an increase even before the one-year period s

HOUSE/ A6

Gringo sent surrender feelers, says Pimentel

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

FORMER SEN. GREGORIO HONASAN HAS sent feelers he is willing to face the music if he is assured of a fair shake, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said yesterday.

Pimentel said Honasan sent him four text messages last week asking for his help in dealing with the rebellion case filed against him for his alleged participation in a plot to unseat President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"As a former colleague, I am prepared to assist him in all legal avenues so he'll get a fair deal with the government," Pimentel said in an interview with the INQUIRER. "I will try to help out by way of determining whether or not Gringo can surface and face his accusers."

He said Honasan had apparently gone into hiding because the government had been treating him as if he were already convicted of the charges against him. Pointing out that re-

GRINGO/ A22

LOU EHLERS Cadillac

US IMMIGRANTS' BOYCOTT: Students display flags of their home countries along Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles Monday. More than one million immigrants and their supporters across the United States staged a one-day nationwide strike and boycott of schools and businesses to demand reforms and help millions of illegal workers gain legal status. *(Story in The World, Page A28.)* AFP

La Mesa housing project pits environmentalists vs workers

By Volt Contreras and Philip C. Tubeza

AFTER WAITING ALMOST FOUR DECADES, close to 1,500 families may finally build their dream homes and live together as neighbors on some prime real estate.

But this future community is now seen as "a serious threat" to the water supply of 12 million other residents of Metro Manila and nearby towns.

For the country's leading environmentalists, this prospect is simply hard to swallow.

A coalition led by ABS-CBN Foundation Inc.'s Bantay Kalikasan yesterday launched a campaign to block a Supreme Court-approved housing project "within" the La Mesa watershed, the main source of drinking water for the capital's 12 million residents.

The project stands to benefit at least 1,411 employees of the old National Waterworks and Sewerage Administration (Nawasa) who were granted rights to the land back in 1968. Nawasa was the forerunner of today's Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

In a press conference in Makati City yesterday, AFI managing director Gina Lopez said the "Save the La Mesa Coalition" was not questioning the housing project per se, but only the location chosen by the MWSS.

Warning that the planned homes could send pollutants "downstream" into the La Mesa reservoir, the group hopes to either stop the issuance of environmental permits for the project or sway the SC into recalling the ruling that green-lighted the project in 1975.

A University of the Philippines professor, a guest at the press conference, said he was originally asked by the MWSS to study ways to "mitigate" the environmental impact of the project. Ultimately, he recommended that the project be shelved.

The housing project granted a 58-hectare

LA MESA/ A10

Dry season over soon, says Pagasa

HOT NA HOT
NA KAMI
PARA SA
TAG-ULAN!

YOUNG boys beat the sweltering summer heat by cooling themselves under a bucket and a water pump on the UP Diliman campus in Quezon City.

JOAN BONDOC

By Norman Bordadora

THE DAYS ARE STILL UNBEARABLY hot, but according to the weather bureau summer is officially on its way out.

In fact, the country should prepare for the start of the rainy season in the second half of May, a senior meteorologist said yesterday.

Nathaniel Cruz, head of the weather branch of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), said that although the La Niña weather pattern in the country was nearly over, "we should be prepared for the coming of the rainy season which will start in the second half of May [and last] until September."

La Niña, which is associated with increased rainfall, storms and flooding in most parts of Asia, was felt in the Philippines from December till March. During that time, most parts of the Philippines experienced above average rainfall, Cruz said.

DRY SEASON/ A10

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Mindanao including Palawan will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening.

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/05/02/06 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FrontPage

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Erap going home to Polk St., finally

By Nelson F. Flores

THE SANDIGANBAYAN SPECIAL DIVISION YESTERDAY granted deposed President Joseph Estrada's request for a leave from house arrest to attend his mother's 101st birthday at his Polk Street residence in San Juan.

This marks the first time that Estrada will set foot on his residence since he was arrested on April 25, 2001. His several attempts to go to Polk St. in the past even for a brief period failed and were vehemently opposed.

The antigraft court, which is trying Estrada's cases, however, rejected his request to undergo a dental check-up at the Asian Hospital in Muntinlupa scheduled for tomorrow. He was also barred from giving any press interviews while he was out.

In a two-page resolution, the Sandiganbayan allowed Estrada to leave his detention center in Tanay, Rizal at 7 a.m. today and proceed directly to No. 1 Polk St., North Greenhills where his mother, Doña Mary Ejercito, would celebrate her birthday. He was allowed to stay until 10 p.m.

Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice and Special Division chair Teresita Leonardo de Castro and Associate Justices Francisco Villaruz Jr. and Diosdado Peralta agreed to Estrada's request after Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio and the Philippine National Police (PNP) interposed no objections.

In its order, the antigraft court ordered the PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao, PNP-Police Security and Protection Office Director Chief. Supt. Edgardo Doromal to coordinate all security measures with Sandiganbayan Chief Sheriff Edgardo Urieta.

Lomibao, Doromal and Urieta were likewise ordered to ensure that Estrada be immediately returned to Tanay at 10 p.m. today; to take control and supervise all visitors; to regulate the use of communications and electronic devices such as cell phones by Estrada and those within his immediate vicinity while at his Polk Street residence; and to disallow media interviews except upon order of the court.

The Sandiganbayan had to reset the hearing of Estrada's cases scheduled today to Friday, May 5 due to the former President's visit to his ailing mother.

In junking Estrada's request to see his dentist, the court took into account the objection of the PNP, which cited lack of sufficient time to thresh out all security concerns.

With AFP

ESTRADA kisses his mother on her 100th birthday last year.

PDI FILE

Metro terror threat down – PNP

THE PRE-LABOR DAY POLICE RAID IN A SUSpected Abu Sayyaf safehouse in Marikina City had driven off an Abu Sayyaf "sleeper" cell from Metro Manila, a top police intelligence official said yesterday.

Senior Supt. Romeo Ricardo, officer in charge of the Philippine National Police Intelligence Group [PNP-IG], said the departure diminished the threat of terrorist attacks in the capital.

"The group who owned the grenades and explosive materials in Marikina is out of Luzon at the moment. We see no specific threat from this group," he said in a news conference in Camp Crame.

"Most of them [members of the sleeper cell] have left Luzon. There are one or two members left but they cannot act by themselves," he went on.

But Ricardo would not say where the suspected Abu Sayyaf members fled to.

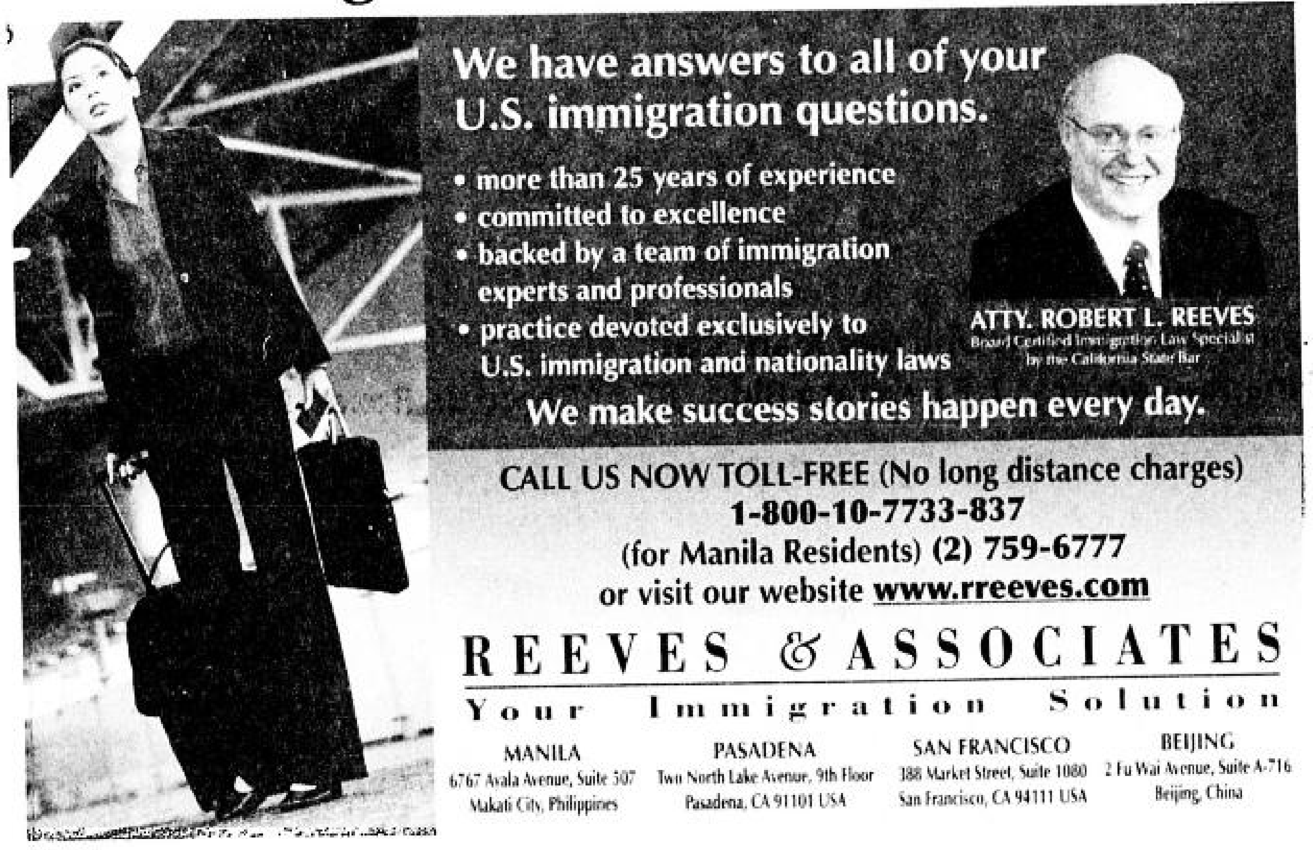
Police earlier claimed the Abu Sayyaf had a sleeper cell in Metro Manila with about 10 members.

Last Thursday, operatives of the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group [CIDG] seized a cache of grenades and other explosives from what it claimed to be an Abu Sayyaf safehouse at the SSS village in Marikina City.

Officials immediately claimed the explosives were meant to bomb Labor Day rallies last Monday.

The police also said they recovered computer files and documents from the safehouse.

Ricardo admitted the seized documents did not mention any bomb plots or targets.



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RP police hail conviction of Indon terrorist

SUNATA behind bars AP

PHILIPPINE SECURITY officials yesterday welcomed an Indonesian court's conviction of an Islamic militant who is believed to have helped raise funds and plan terrorist attacks in the country.

An Indonesian court on Monday sentenced three Islamic militants, including Abdulah Sunata, to up to seven years in prison for sheltering Southeast Asia's top terrorist suspect Noordin Top and financing bombings in Indonesia.

The court said all three had connections with the al-Qaida-linked militant group Jemaah Islamiyah, which has been blamed for a string of deadly suicide attacks. Sunata has admitted meeting Top, but denied terrorism charges.

Senior Superintendent Romeo Ricardo, officer-in-charge of the Philippine police's Intelligence Group, said Sunata played a key role in recruiting new Indonesian members of Jemaah Islamiyah whom he sent to terrorist training camps in the southern Philippines.

Sunata frequently corresponded with two top Indonesian terror suspects—Dulmatin, who goes by one name, and Umar Patek—who are believed to be hiding with Abu Sayyaf guerrillas in southern Mindanao region, where Filipino Islamic insurgents have been waging a decades-long secessionist war, he said.

Sunata allegedly was trying to help raise funds in the Middle East to finance terror attacks and training in the Philippines, Ricardo said, citing captured mail between Sunata and Dulmatin and Patek.

In a swap of letters discovered by Indonesian police, Sunata discussed with Dulmatin the deployment of Indonesian would-be suicide bombers for an attack in the Philippines, the purchase of explosives in the country for a bombing in Indonesia, recent arrests of Indonesian militants in the Philippines and tips for casing potential targets, according to confidential Philippine government reports seen by The Associated Press last September.

"It's a good development because we know their network is being cut," Ricardo said of Sunata's conviction.

Ric Blancaflor, an official of Manila's Anti-Terrorism Task Force, said Sunata's conviction "was an encouraging sign," considering he was arrested last year with the help of Indonesia's new antiterrorism law.

Washington has offered huge rewards for the capture of Dulmatin and Patek, who are key suspects in the 2002 nightclub bombings that killed 202 people in Indonesia's resort island of Bali.

They fled to the southern Philippines to escape an Indonesian government manhunt and are believed to be hiding with Abu Sayyaf guerrillas on southern Jolo island or nearby Basilan or Tawi-Tawi provinces, Ricardo said.

The small but brutal Abu Sayyaf group has also been linked to the al-Qaida. *AP*

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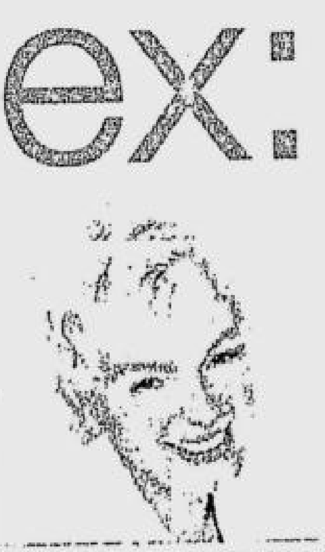
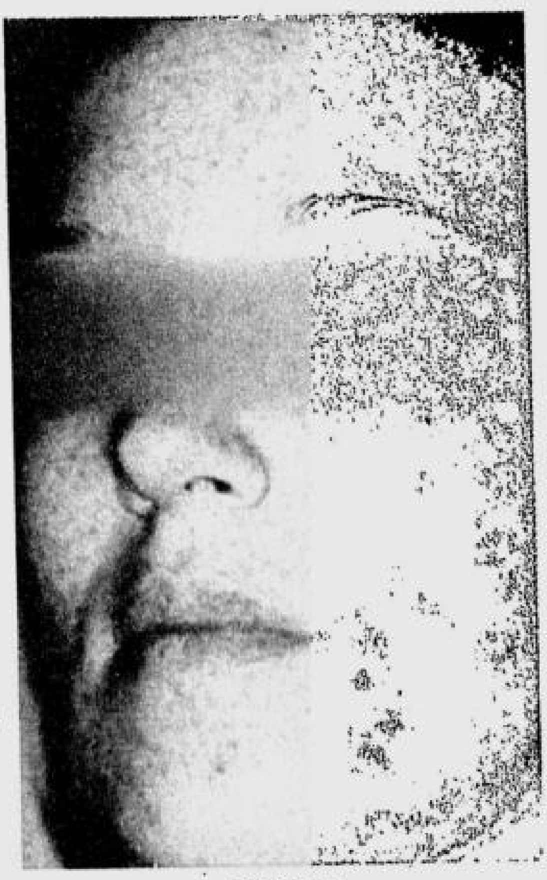


Dr. Miriam Christina Zehavi



BEFORE

AFTER COMODEX

Acne is not merely a problem that affects one's physical aspect. These unsightly eruptions affect one's emotional and mental well-being. Having acne can result to low self-esteem, anti-social tendencies and even depression.

There have been many futile attempts to eliminate the persistent problem of acne and some who have been unsuccessful in treating it may have resigned themselves to accepting it as a reality. Facial Care Centre, the leading professional skincare center, brings new hope through an innovation in acne treatment: **Comodex.** Using an ideal combination of potent ingredients for in-depth cleansing, Comodex is the answer to the failed attempts of some to eliminate acne.

Comodex explores a "nature-inspired" way of treating acne by utilizing the benefits of **tomato extract.** Tomatoes are naturally acidic, and can help regulate the sebum production of the skin while maintaining its natural pH balance. It also contains lycopene, which is the most powerful anti-oxidant. Lycopene promotes faster healing, stops the growth of microorganisms and reduces swelling and redness.

There are some skin treatments out in the market today which have also been making use of the benefits of tomato. But while these things contain tomato extract and lycopene, Comodex contains other active ingredients that intensify the advantageous effects of these ingredients. All the elements in Comodex complement and enhance each other's benefits. The vitamin and citrus extracts for instance, serve as clarifying agents that suppress the hyperactivity of melanin, helping lighten post-treatment blemishes and pimple scars.

Facial Care Centre recently brought international skincare expert, Dr. Miriam Christina Zehavi to the Philippines. She provided lectures and training to FCC's in-house staff on the new anti-acne solution. Dr. Zehavi was all praises for Comodex, which she claims is an extremely effective "all-in-one" acne treatment. "Comodex can effectively dry up pimples while controlling the spread of bacteria due to its anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties," claims Dr. Zehavi. "It even promotes faster healing of existing pimples and inhibits infections."

She emphasizes on Comodex's use of **tomato extract**, which is rich in the anti-oxidant lycopene. "Lycopene is the most powerful natural anti-oxidant," claims Dr. Zehavi. "This anti-oxidant helps cure acne by promoting faster healing, stopping the growth of microorganisms, reducing swelling or redness and preventing irritation." The **Vitamins A, B, C and citrus fruit extracts** in Comodex also help clarify the skin and promote collagen synthesis.

While effects of Comodex may vary depending on the severity of acne, a notable improvement is visible after only a second session. What's more, maximum results from the treatment can be seen after only five sessions!

Dr. Zehavi adds, "What makes the Comodex treatment so impressive is that it does not stop at treating acne alone. It also makes a significant difference on the skin's texture and prevents the onset of new acne." This means that after each session while acne is being cured, the skin is continually improving.

The ingredients used in this breakthrough treatment ensure a significant transformation in the skin condition, no matter how complex the acne case is. In addition to that, the prevention of future acne breakouts sounds very promising.

Now, that should clear things up.

Comodex treatments are available at the Facial Care Centre. For more information on this innovation in anti-acne therapy, call 892-SKIN (7546) for a free consultation. ■

FOILING RAPE

Pinay in Saudi jail for cutting off assailant's penis

RIYADH—A SAUDI MAN WAS RECOVERING in hospital after having his penis sewn back on by surgeons but the maid who chopped it off when he sexually assaulted her is under arrest, reports said Monday.

The maid's 38-year-old employer assaulted her while his wife was asleep, the Okaz daily said.

She grabbed a knife from the kitchen to defend herself and used it when he persisted despite having it brandished in his face, the paper said.

He is now recuperating after successful surgery in a specialist hospital in Riyadh, while she has been detained for questioning, it added, without identifying either party.

Foreign workers in Saudi Arabia, many of whom work in domestic service, are systematically abused and exploited, the New York-based advocacy group Human Rights Watch said in a July 2004 report.

The Saudi authorities strongly deny the charge. *AFP*

Solon seeks end to speculations on fate of 1017

By Philip C. Tubeza

AN ADMINISTRATION ALLY IN CONGRESS yesterday called for an end to speculations on what the Supreme Court would decide regarding Presidential Proclamation No. 1017, which placed the country under a state of national emergency in February.

Ilocos Sur Rep. Salacnib Baterina, vice chair of the House committee on justice, said he believed the Supreme Court's ruling, whatever it might be, "will greatly help normalize the political situation in the country."

"In deference to the high court, let's stop speculating on its ruling. Let's respect the justices' wisdom in coming out with a decision on the emergency decree," Baterina said in a statement.

He said he supported the government position that PP 1017 was justified in light of the discovery of a supposed tactical alliance among Leftist and Rightist groups and the political opposition to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo during the 20th anniversary celebration of the 1986 People Power revolt on Feb. 24.

"The assessment of the situation revealed that the threat to the government was real and serious. Proclamation 1017 was issued by the President to protect the government from a conspiracy to topple it. It proved to be effective," Baterina said.

He said there would have been no need for the proclamation had the President's political foes "listened to the constant appeal to cease from too much politicking."

"The anti-Arroyo forces used different tools in their efforts to unseat the President. Thus, the Palace can't be blamed for doing what was necessary to make sure that law and order prevailed," he said.

Baterina called on everyone to respect the Supreme Court ruling which is expected before May 8.

"The decision is not meant to sow divisiveness in the country but to bring forth a resolution on the constitutionality of the proclamation. We must all abide by it and let's move forward henceforth," he said.

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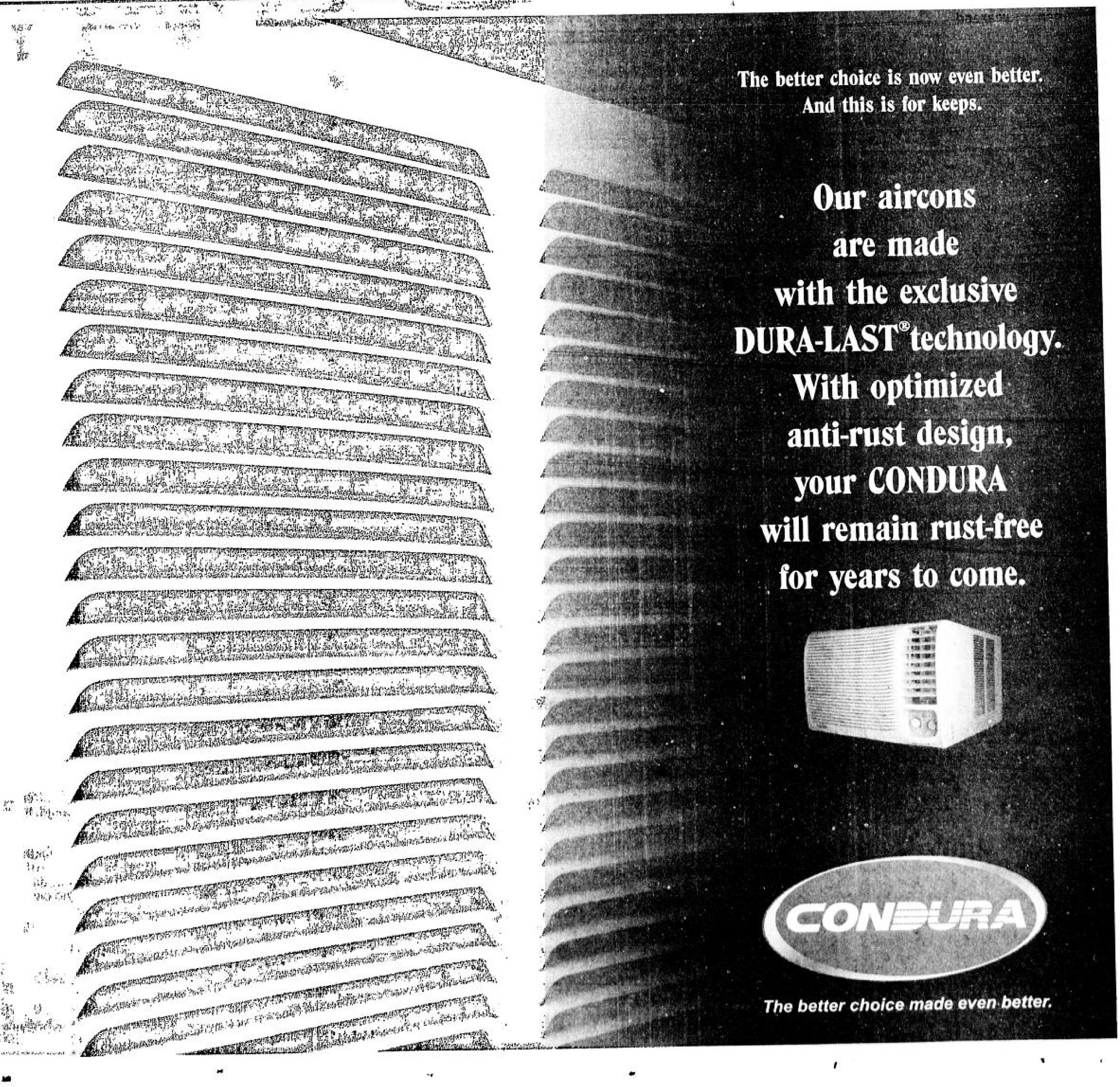
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Cha-cha backers see plebiscite by July

By Philip C. Tubeza and Norman Bordadora

DESPITE DELAYS, CHARTER CHANGE (CHA-cha) proponents expect a plebiscite by July on proposals to dismantle the presidential system and set up a parliamentary government, a ranking House leader said yesterday.

Cagayan de Oro Rep. Constantino Jaraula, chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments, said that once Congress approved the proposed changes before adjourning in June, they would be sent to the Commission on Elections for a plebiscite by July.

Jaraula gave the timetable as pro-Cha-cha lawyer Raul Lambino disclosed he had asked the Department of Interior and Local Government and the national police to provide security for the millions of signatures that the group Sigaw ng Bayan has gathered in support for a people's initiative to amend the Constitution.

Jaraula said all possible delays—including legal challenges before the Supreme Court—had been factored into the timetable, under which a parliamentary system would be installed before the year ended.

"We will have a vote on the floor before we adjourn in June and then we could have a plebiscite on the first or second week of July," Jaraula said in an interview.

Last week, Jaraula filed a resolution calling for a constituent assembly. The resolution includes a draft Constitution abolishing the Senate to pave the way for a unicameral parliament.

Flexible timetable

Jaraula said the House would vote on the actual proposed changes to the Constitution by the end of the month or the first week of June.

He said the House already approved last year a resolution calling for a constituent assembly.

"The timeline is adjustable. It is not fixed. It does not mean that if we fail to meet it, (Cha-cha) would be dead," Jaraula said.

He noted that supporters of the people's initiative had yet to file a petition before the Comelec because of the need for documentation and the verification of signatures.

Parliament by yearend

"It's been delayed by one or two weeks but that is not fatal. Any delay would not be critical as long as they are utilized to substantially comply with the requirements," he said.

"The plebiscite can be held in July or August. It would be very delayed if it were in September. We are looking at having a parliamentary system within the year," he added.

While the resolution filed last week for a constituent assembly only had 173 signatures, Jaraula said he was confident that the majority coalition would get the required 195 votes by end of the month.

"What is important is the actual vote on the floor. We are confident that we can get the required number after we have our debates. We will then vote on the actual amendments," he said.

Challenge to the Senate

Jaraula contends that only three-fourths of all the members of Congress, or 195, would be needed for Congress to constitute itself into a constituent assembly.

The Senate, which is largely opposed to Charter change, insists that the two houses of Congress should vote separately on the suggested amendments if proposals for a constituent assembly pushed through.

"They can go to the Supreme Court or maybe they might later decide to join us," Jaraula said.

Jaraula last week said the House resolution calling for a constituent assembly was not in conflict with the Palace-backed people's initiative. He said the two would complement each other.

He explained that the proposals in the people's initiative with regard to Article 6 and 7 of the 1987 Constitution—changing the system of government with transitory provisions—were "substantially the same as the House proposals."

GMA's powers

The difference is that the people's initiative only contemplates a shift to a parliamentary system with a unicameral parliament, while the House resolution proposes a "package of amendments" in the political and economic provisions of the Charter.

Jaraula said the draft Constitution calls on President Macapagal-Arroyo to "share power with the interim prime minister," limiting her functions to certain areas.

"When the interim parliament shall have elected an interim prime minister, the likelihood is for President Arroyo to delegate some powers to the prime minister. It's not diminishing her powers but enhancing her ability to govern by having more time for a focused area," said Jaraula.

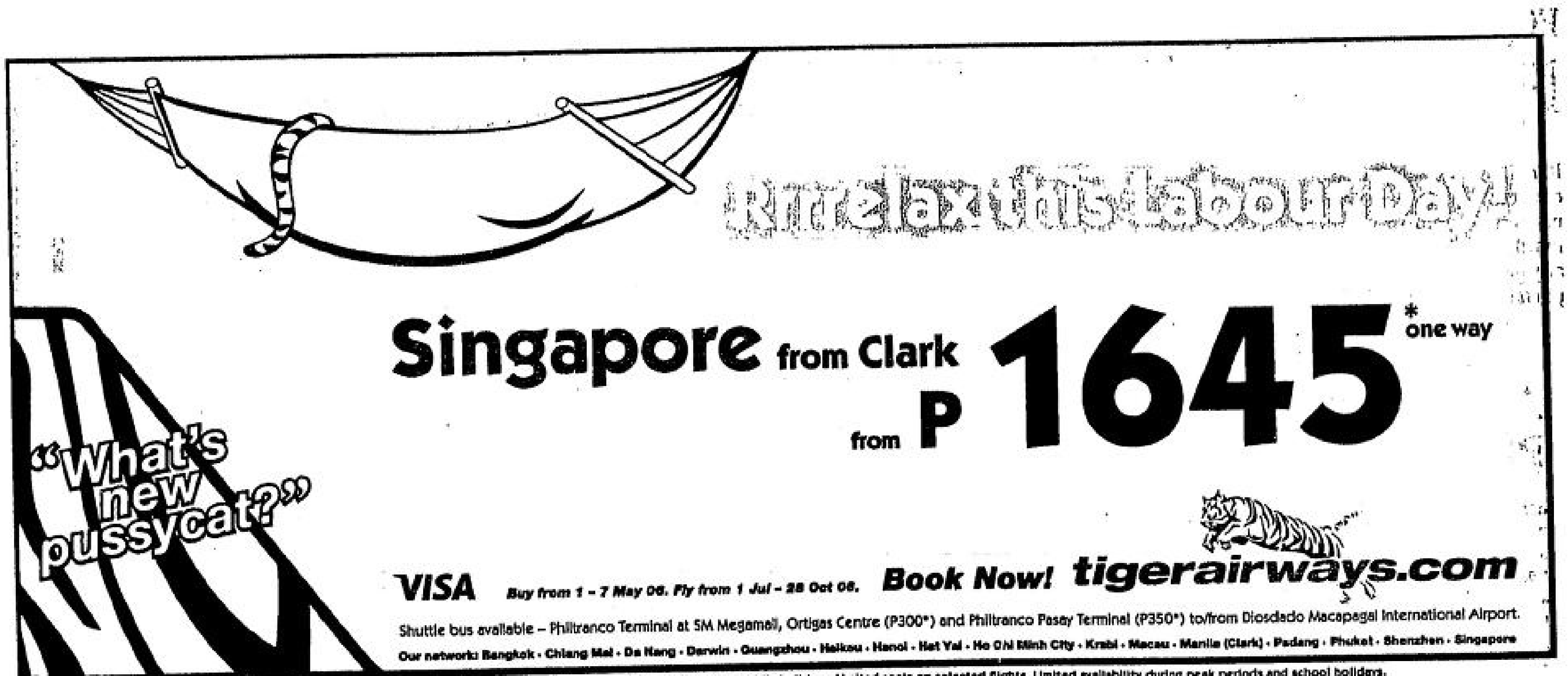
"A delegated power can be withdrawn anytime. So it will not diminish [her powers]," he said.

Signatures in storage

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, however, told the INQUIRER that he had yet to receive a formal request from Sigaw ng Bayan on the need for police security in the place where the signatures were being kept.

He said he would have to refer the matter to the DILG's legal department for study.

"But my initial personal inclination would be against providing security for a purely private undertaking such as theirs," Puno said.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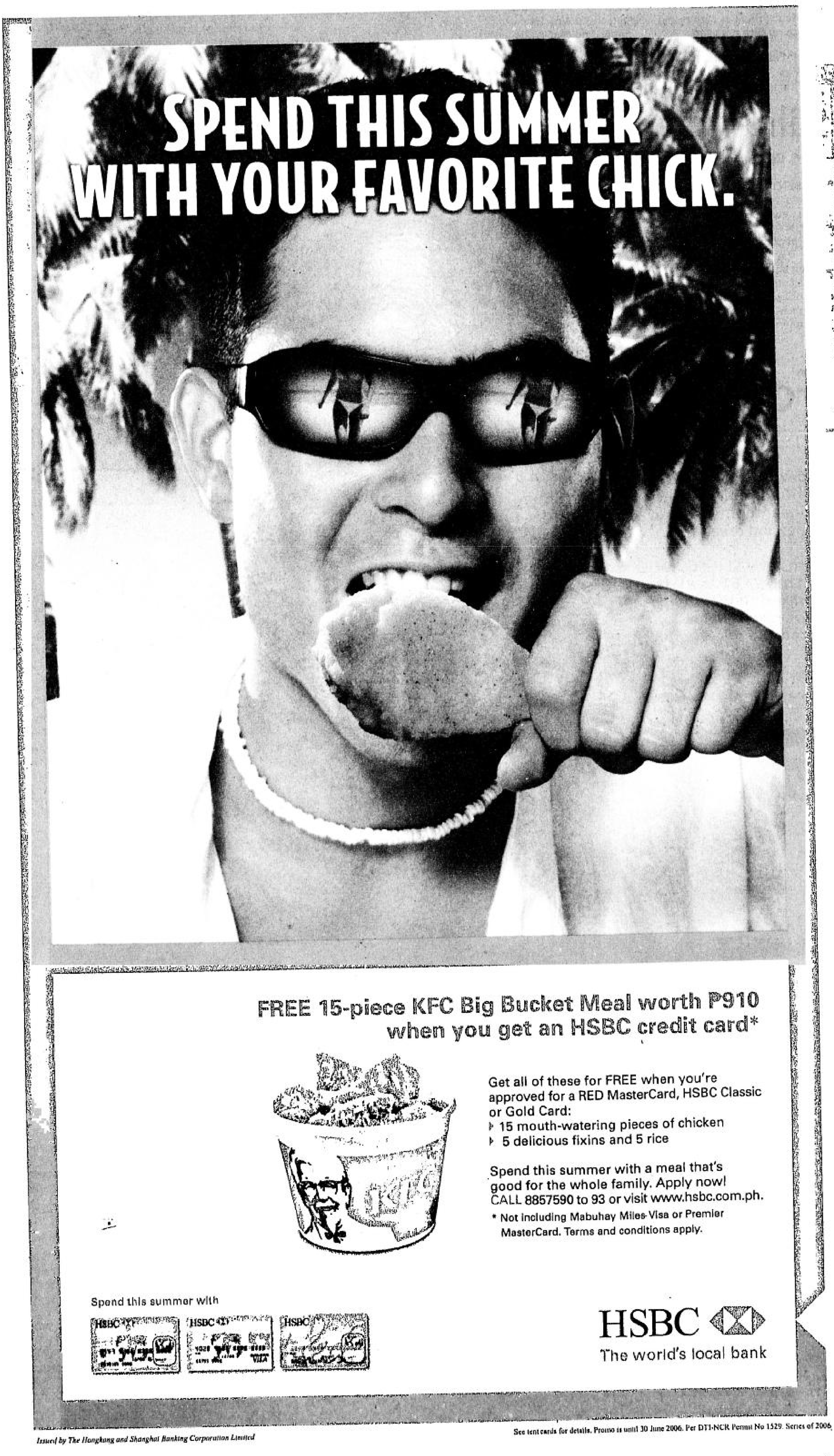
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3 GMA men snub Senate hearing

From page A1

ernment executives from congressional hearings without her consent.

He had said earlier that the hearing would be the first test of Malacañang's compliance with the high court's ruling, which was issued last week.

The tribunal had voted to uphold the right of Congress to compel executive branch officials to appear at its inquiries. It voided a provision in EO 464 requiring these officials, including Armed Forces generals and flag officers as well as police officials from chief superintendent on up, to secure prior clearance from the President.

Teves, Favila and Buñag did not invoke EO 464. They were attending other meetings, according to their subordinates.

Recto's committee was tackling bills on the reduction of individual income tax rates, the rationalization of fiscal incentives and measures to curb smuggling.

CUSTOMS Commissioner Napoleon Morales answers questions during a Senate hearing on Tuesday. Beside him is Reynaldo Nicolas, a customs director.

ROGER MARGALLO

Lower-ranking officials

Only a director, Malou Recente, came to represent Teves, who was reportedly in India.

Trade Undersecretary Elmer Hernandez attended on behalf of Favila, who was supposedly at a Cabinet meeting.

Reynoso Floreza of the Bureau of Internal Revenue said that his immediate boss was at another meeting and that he did not know where Buñag was.

Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales came late.

Enrile said that while he was not denigrating the capabilities of the lower-ranking officials who showed up at the hearing, he doubted whether they could commit their departments to the various proposals being crafted for legislation.

"Do you think the meetings of the congressional committees are not important [and should] not be a priority of the head of the office?" he said, adding:

"If you are not interested in the legislative work of Congress, then we're also not interested to pass laws for you."

'They must be busy'

Enrile moved that the committee not hear the positions of the departments whose heads were not present.

But Malacañang made light of the absence of Teves, Favila and Buñag at the Senate hearing.

"We are not aware of the hearing, and neither did any of the officials ask for the President's consent to attend. They must be busy with official work," said Michael Defensor, Ms Arroyo's chief of staff.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye confirmed that Teves was en route to India to attend a conference of the Asian Development Bank. Bunye said he was unaware of the reasons for the absence of Favila and Buñag.

According to Enrile, however, the absence of the three officials was a sign of disrespect to the senators in whom are vested the "sovereign will of the people."

"If the President will call a meeting in Malacañang and we will send our chiefs of staff, what is the impression [she will get]?" Enrile said.

Recto said the committee hearings would proceed and the three officials would be invited to attend next week's hearing.

He said he did not consider their absence a deliberate defiance of the high court's ruling on EO 464, but he was disappointed.

"I would prefer that the Cabinet officials be here so we can make decisions on these measures," he said.

Recto also said the Senate had the option not to act on economic measures for which various agencies had been seeking approval.

Explosive cases

With the voiding of portions of EO 464, lawmakers had earlier announced that they would resume the investigation of potentially explosive cases, including the "Hello Garci" wiretapping scandal and the allegedly overpriced NorthRail project.

"The officials who were called previously but decided not to appear because of EO 464 will be invited again. They can no longer invoke [it]," said Senate President Franklin Drilon.

But Deputy Speaker for Mindanao Gerry Salapuddin voiced Malacañang's apprehension, saying the Supreme Court ruling could signal "open season for political witch-hunts." *With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Militant labor left out in the cold

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo has formed a monitoring team to ensure the swift implementation of the P40-billion economic package she unveiled on Labor Day—but the militants were left out in the cold.

The monitoring team is composed of Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Donald Dee and Trade Union Congress of the Philippines president Democrito Mendoza.

Sto. Tomas said the government had not thought of inviting a representative from radical labor groups because "they do not believe in whatever the government does or says, anyway."

Sto. Tomas said the setting up of the team was part of the President's commitment to address the growing clamor for higher wages in the face of the rising cost of living.

In forming the monitoring team, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said Ms Arroyo wanted to make sure that "every word of her speech is felt across all sectors through concrete action undertaken along a firm, immovable time line."

Bunye said the Labor Day package was "but the start of an active search for ways to empower the Filipino worker and his or her family."

Half of the package, or P20 billion, was allocated to the salary standardization of government employees while more than a quarter, P11.2 billion, would come in the form of the condonation of loan surcharges and penalties.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya assured workers that there were funds for almost all of the package even if approval of the 2006 budget has been delayed.

House bent …

From page A1

is reached in July if it could be shown that a "supervening event" warranted it.

A proposal for a P125 legislated wage increase has been pending in the House for at least the last five years. The Kilusang Mayo Uno said the real value of that amount had shrunk to P65.

Nograles, who calendars the bills for plenary debates, said the chamber would pursue deliberations on the proposed wage hike for private sector workers.

No clear signal from GMA

"The President's declaration leaving it up to the wage boards to determine a reasonable wage increase is not a clear indication that she is against a legislated wage hike nor has she sent a signal to her majority allies in Congress to stop consideration of the bill," Nograles said in a text message.

He pointed out that the chamber was "almost finished" with the debates and would move to the period of amendments and voting on second reading.

"We will have to vote on the measure. We can't side-step it," Nograles said of the wage bill principally authored by Anakpawis party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran.

Wisdom in the bill

Barinaga said his committee found wisdom in increasing the salaries of private and state workers.

Aside from a wage increase for private workers, both Barinaga and Beltran have asked the chamber to raise by P3,000 the monthly take-home pay of government workers.

On Labor Day, Ms Arroyo urged the labor and management sectors to find a "middle ground" that would ease the plight of workers while preserving the investment climate.

"I support a reasonable wage increase hammered out by the tripartite regional wage boards," Ms Arroyo said when she unveiled a P40-billion package of benefits for workers.

Wage review can begin

Pending approval of a wage increase, some members of the House labor committee urged the wage boards to start reviewing the current wage levels alongside the prevailing prices of commodities and the cost of services.

"The earlier the wage hike is granted, the better, in the midst of the rising prices of commodities and cost of services due to the reformed value-added tax and oil price increases," Rep. Antonio Cuenco of Cebu City said.

He noted that a "judicious action" on the wage petitions would also prove that Ms Arroyo's pronouncements were not just paying lip service.

Rep. Benasing Macarambon of Lanao del Sur, chair of the committee on agriculture and food, urged the wage boards to come up with projections on the prices of commodities based on oil price trends "so a reasonable wage increase can be determined."

'Supervening event'

At a briefing in Malacañang, Sto. Tomas said employers had told her they were willing to discuss another wage hike for minimum wage earners.

But she said the employers would like to first see the lapse of the 12-month period between wage increases in keeping with the law that no two wage increases can be granted in a year.

Most of the 16 regional wage boards across the country granted a wage increase to workers in July last year.

IN THE KNOW

THE MANDATORY NATIONAL minimum wage law was last stipulated IN Republic Act No. 6727, otherwise known as the Wage Rationalization Act, signed by President Corazon Aquino on June 9, 1989.

The law granted a P25 per day increase in the statutory minimum wage of all workers and employees in the private sector, subject to certain conditions.

The act also abolished the national minimum wage rate. Citing the policy of the State "to rationalize the fixing of minimum wages," it stipulated the setting up of regional minimum wages through the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Boards.

Since then, increases to the minimum wage were made by region through wage orders by the different regional boards.

PDI Research

But Sto. Tomas said the same law allowed for another wage increase within a year "provided there is a supervening event."

Wages eroded

"This supervening event will show that there is considerable erosion in the wages of workers, that the previous wage increase has been significantly reduced or has been eaten up," Sto. Tomas told the INQUIRER.

Asked if the surge in oil prices was a supervening event, Sto. Tomas said that labor groups should show that the oil price hikes had had an impact on consumer prices.

She also said that labor and management could talk about an increase even today, but its implementation could only happen after July.

A P238 difference

Sto. Tomas said that so far only the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) and the Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) had petitioned for a wage hike. The TUCP is asking for a P75 daily wage increase for workers.

She said the minimum wage in Metro Manila had increased to P325 since 1987, when it stood at P68.

"So between 1987 and today, we have already added P238 to the pay of workers, or almost double the P125 daily wage hike being asked now by labor groups in the streets," she said.

"*Siguro mas mabuti na nakikipagusap ka sa wage boards kaysa nagmamarcha sa kalsada kasi may nakukuha ka na P238* (Maybe it's better to talk to the wage boards rather than march in the streets because you can get P238)," Sto.Tomas said.

"You can't jump in the streets with a placard and then we will follow you. Pity us," she said.

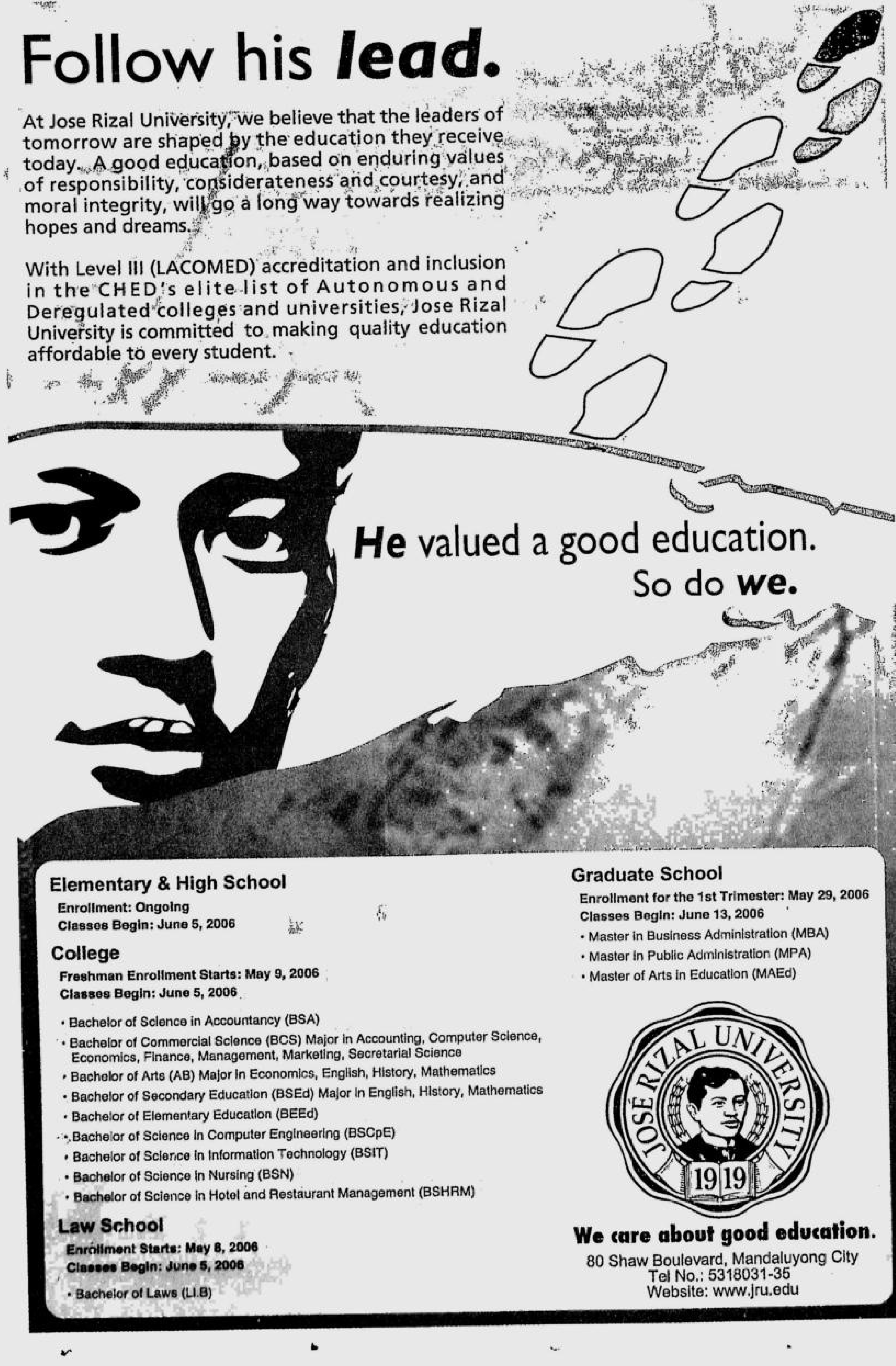
Band-aid solutions

In Cebu City, leaders of moderate labor groups were lukewarm toward Ms Arroyo's announced package of benefits for workers.

TUCP national president Democrito Mendoza, who did not attend the luncheon hosted by Ms Arroyo but instead joined a Labor Day celebration in Cebu, said the immediate need of workers was a wage increase.

Militant labor groups also criticized the Labor Day package.

"These are just ... band-aid solutions to allay workers' discontent about this administration's performance to address the worsening jobs crisis," said Josua Mata, secretary general of the Alliance of Progressive Labor. *With reports from Leila B. Salaverria and Jerome Aning in Manila; Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau, and trainee Alda Quodala*



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RP pirates tagged in deadly attack on Chinese boat

BEIJING—A PHILIPPINE BOAT is believed to be behind an attack on a Chinese fishing vessel in the South China Sea that ended with four crew members dead and three wounded, state press said Tuesday.

"The incident occurred close to the Philippines and the boat that attacked the fishing boat … resembled a Philippine boat," the Southern Daily newspaper reported, citing crew members aboard the Chinese fishing boat.

The attack occurred Thursday last week in the disputed Spratly Islands when people from the unidentified boat sprayed the fishing vessel with submachine gun fire and boarded the craft.

Four crew members were killed in the attack, with the assailants stealing the boat's navigational and electronic equipment.

"Of the 13 pirates who boarded the fishing boat, most were under the age of 30, six of them wore camouflage clothes while the other seven were casually dressed," the fishermen told the newspaper.

"The attack appeared to be organized." The report gave no other details to back up its assertion that the boat resembled one from the Philippines.

The Chinese boat, the Jinghai 03012, has since returned to its home base on China's southern Hainan island with the three wounded crew members in a stable condition, the paper said.

According to the Beijing Youth Daily, China's foreign ministry has called for an immediate investigation into the killings and urged countries neighboring the South China Sea to ensure the "personal safety of Chinese fishermen engaged in normal work." The Spratly Islands consist of more than 100 small islands or reefs that are claimed partially or entirely by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines.

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AIDS issue prompts Pope to review ban on condoms

From page A1

confirmed that Pope Benedict XVI had requested a report on whether it might be acceptable for Catholics to use condoms in one narrow circumstance—to protect life inside a marriage when one partner is infected with HIV or is sick with AIDS.

Whatever the Pope ultimately decides, Church officials and other experts broadly agree that it is remarkable that so delicate an issue is being taken up. But they also agree that such an inquiry is logical, and particularly significant from Benedict, who was Pope John Paul II's strict enforcer of Church doctrine.

"In some ways, maybe he (Benedict) has got the greatest capacity to do it because there is no doubt about his orthodoxy," said the Rev. Jon Fuller, a Jesuit physician who runs an AIDS clinic at the Boston Medical Center.

The issue has surfaced repeatedly as one of the most complicated and delicate facing the Church.

For years, some influential cardinals and theologians have argued for a change for couples affected by AIDS in the name of protecting life, while others have fiercely attacked the possibility as demoting the Church's long advocacy of abstinence and marital fidelity to fight the disease.

The news broke just after Benedict celebrated his first anniversary as Pope, a relatively quiet year with few concrete papal acts.

With regard to condoms, the only change apparently being considered is in the specific case of married couples.

But any change, however narrow, would be unpopular with conservative Catholics, some of whom have already expressed disappointment that Benedict has displayed a softer face now as defender of the faith than he did when he was still Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the papal adviser.

Critics of the current Vatican policy say it is hard for the Church to remain consistent on so-called life issues, like its opposition to abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty, when condom use can help prevent the spread of AIDS.

But there is a deep vein of feeling against any change. Some oppose any perceived erosion of Humanae Vitae, the 1968 encyclical that banned artificial contraception, while other opponents say approving condoms for AIDS prevention might be interpreted as a wider acceptance of their use.

New York Times News Service

POPE Benedict XVI confronts condom issue. AP

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ENROLLMENT ON-GOING!

Opus Dei rushing paper to refute 'Da Vinci Code'

From page A1

guide the Catholic flock, will publish "The Da Vinci Code Phenomenon: Why this Blockbuster is a Faith Buster."

The 36-page paper will be a handy, easy-to-read compilation of Church positions seeking to correct both theological and historical inaccuracies that purportedly abound in the hugely successful novel of former public school teacher Dan Brown.

It will sell for P30 and will serve as the May edition of the center's Documentation Service, a regular literature on Catholic issues usually circulated in parishes and schools.

Expecting a big demand, Fr. Mickey Cardenas, the center's director, said, adding that circulation would be increased from 800 to 2,000.

Answers to questions

"We expect the movie's market to be predominantly university students at the peak of their energy, still seeking answers to many questions;" Cardenas told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview yesterday.

"We want the controversy to be a teaching opportunity for the Church."

Cardenas suggested that the public first read the publication before seeing the much-anticipated Hollywood film directed by Ron Howard.

"It will give answers to questions frequently asked about the Catholic faith," he said.

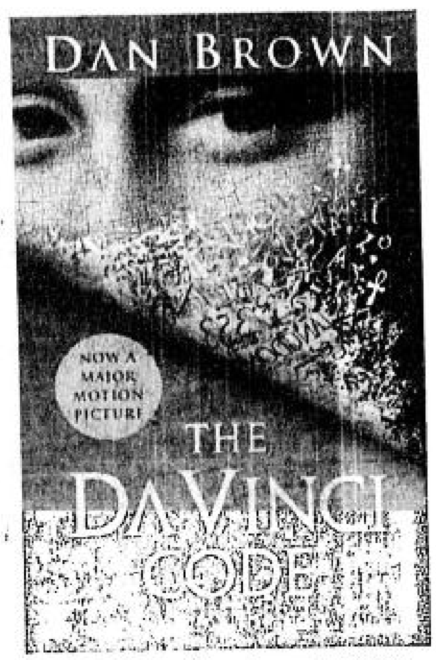
The central—though not exactly new—controversy sparked by the Dan Brown novel is the alleged 2,000-year-old conspiracy to conceal the purported marriage between Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene.

Around this theme, more popularly peddled in the 1980s by the nonfiction book, "Holy Blood Holy Grail," swirl allegations that the "male-dominated" Church purposely suppressed women primarily through Magdalene, and that the divinity of Christ was simply the product of a declaration at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. Convoked by the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, the council was the first ecumenical conference of bishops.

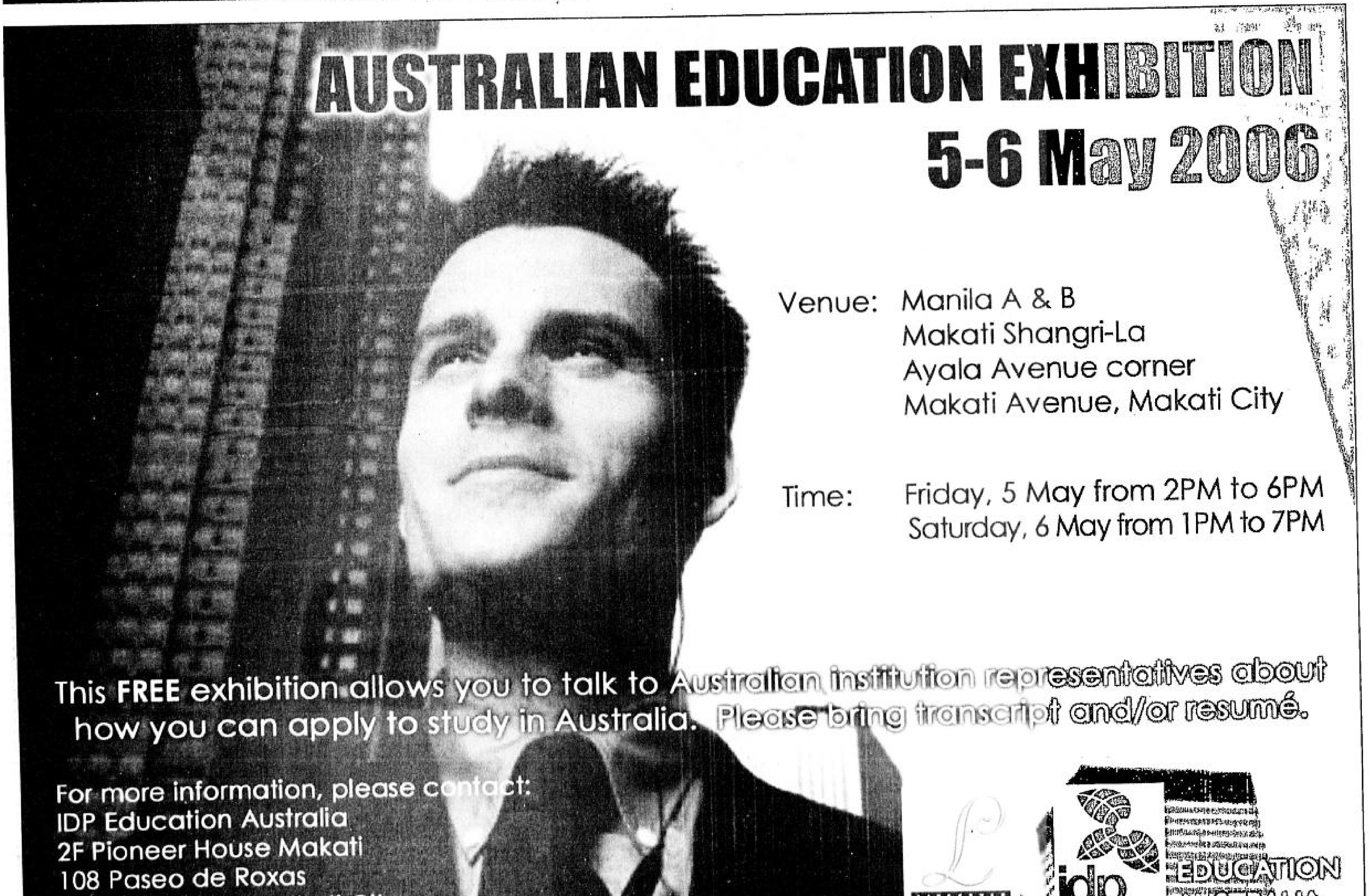
In Brown's novel, Opus Dei, a Catholic organization established by St. Josemaria Escriva in 1928, is portrayed as a shadowy group on a murderous rampage to protect the alleged Vatican secret.

Though the novel is generally presented as fiction, Church experts have dismissed it as the author's way of undermining the Catholic faith.

Cardenas said the Theological Centrum's response would be "calm" to allow a fruitful discourse on the issue.



THE COVER of Dan Brown's highly controversial book, "The Da Vinci Code."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Customs brokers cry foul over 'unusual' apprehensions

By Leila B. Salaverria

TWO CUSTOMS BROKERS ASSOCIATIONS, protesting what they called the Bureau of Customs' "unusual" practice of apprehending their shipments even after these had been cleared and released, yesterday refused to file any import entries at two ports for most of the day.

An import entry is the document by which the BOC bases a shipment's duties and other charges for collection.

The Samahan ng mga Personero sa Aduana (SPA), which is based at the Port of Manila, and the Aksyon Agad Samahan ng mga Personero at Personera, based at the Manila International Container Port, also complained that their apprehended shipments were being held at the Harbour Centre which, they said, lacked equipment and personnel and charged higher storage fees.

The Port of Manila is located at the South Harbor while the MICP is at the North Harbor.

SPA spokesperson Samson Gabisan estimated that each port lost around P30 million from the one-day nonfiling of import entries.

The matter was resolved late in the afternoon after the groups held a dialogue with customs officials. Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales said the filing of import entries resumed at 4 p.m.

Morales said he told the brokers the shipments that were being apprehended after they had left the ports were those that had not been properly taxed because their values had either been underdeclared or misdeclared.

Message to brokers

Morales said the shipments were being seized by the antismuggling task force to show the brokers and importers that even if their shipments had been cleared, they could still be apprehended.

"What we're trying to do is send a message that there is a penance for things not done legally. As long as they do things properly, they won't have any problems," Morales said in a phone interview.

As for the brokers' complaint about the high storage fees at Harbour Centre, Morales said he had asked its officials to charge the same fees as the South Harbor.

Gabisan, for his part, said the SPA stopped filing import entries to let the BOC know it was unhappy about the apprehensions and the use of Harbour Centre as a holding area.

"We wanted to let the commissioner know that we protest the unusual happening wherein shipments that had already been cleared and released by the bureau were being apprehended outside the [ports]," Gabisan said.

He said the brokers had asked that their apprehended shipments be brought to the Port of Manila instead.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, May 3, 2006
Philip and James, Apostles

1st Reading:	1 Cor 15:1-8
Gospel:	John 14:6-14

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me. If you know me, you will know the Father also; indeed you know him and you have seen him."

Philip asked him,"Lord, show us the Father and that is enough." Jesus said to him, "What! I have been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever sees me sees the Father; how can you say: 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

"All that I say to you, I do not say of myself. The Father who dwells in me is doing his own work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; at least believe it on the evidence of these works that I do.

"Truly, I say to you, the one who believes in me will do the same works that I do; and he will even do greater than these, for I am going to the Father. Everything you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. And everything you ask in calling upon my Name, I will do."

Commentary

James is the brother of John the Evangelist, the Beloved Disciple, and both are cousins of Jesus (they are also called the sons of Thunder). Though we do not know the particulars, James sees the Risen Lord. Philip has ties with Gentiles and asks Jesus to show them the Father at the Last Supper. It seems Jesus had to be very patient with both of them, slaw to see who he is and what the consequences of his teaching will mean for their lives. The answer Philip receives: "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father!" That is enough. We too have seen Jesus, in word, in bread, in the poor, in community/Church/Body of Christ, in every human being, because of Incarnation.

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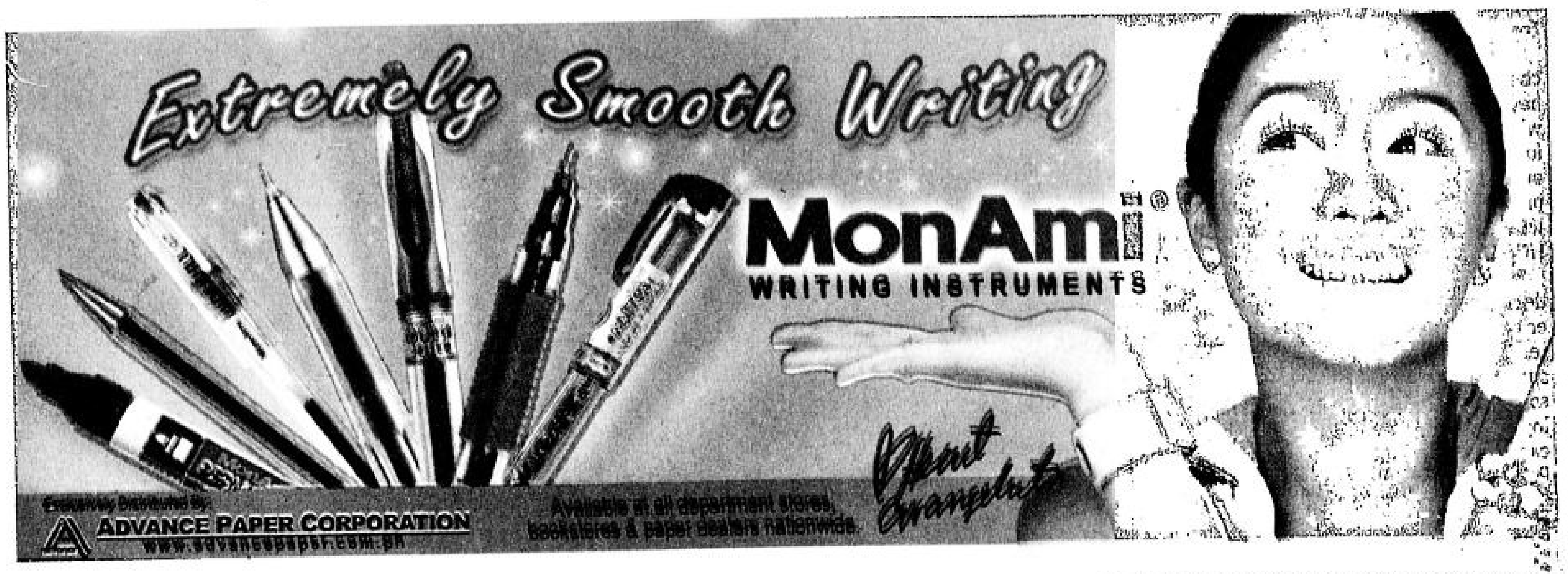
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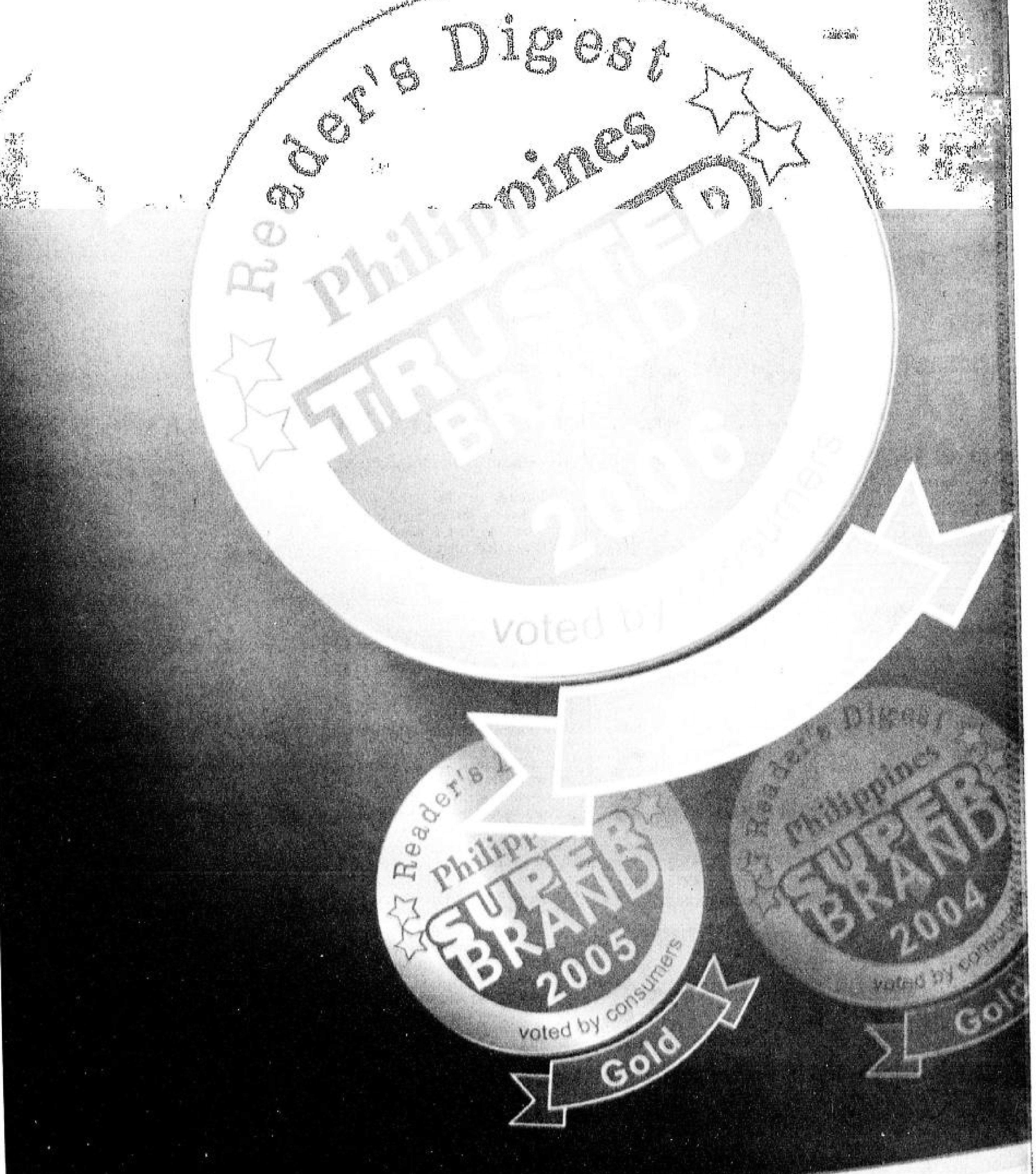

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La Mesa housing project pits environmentalists vs workers

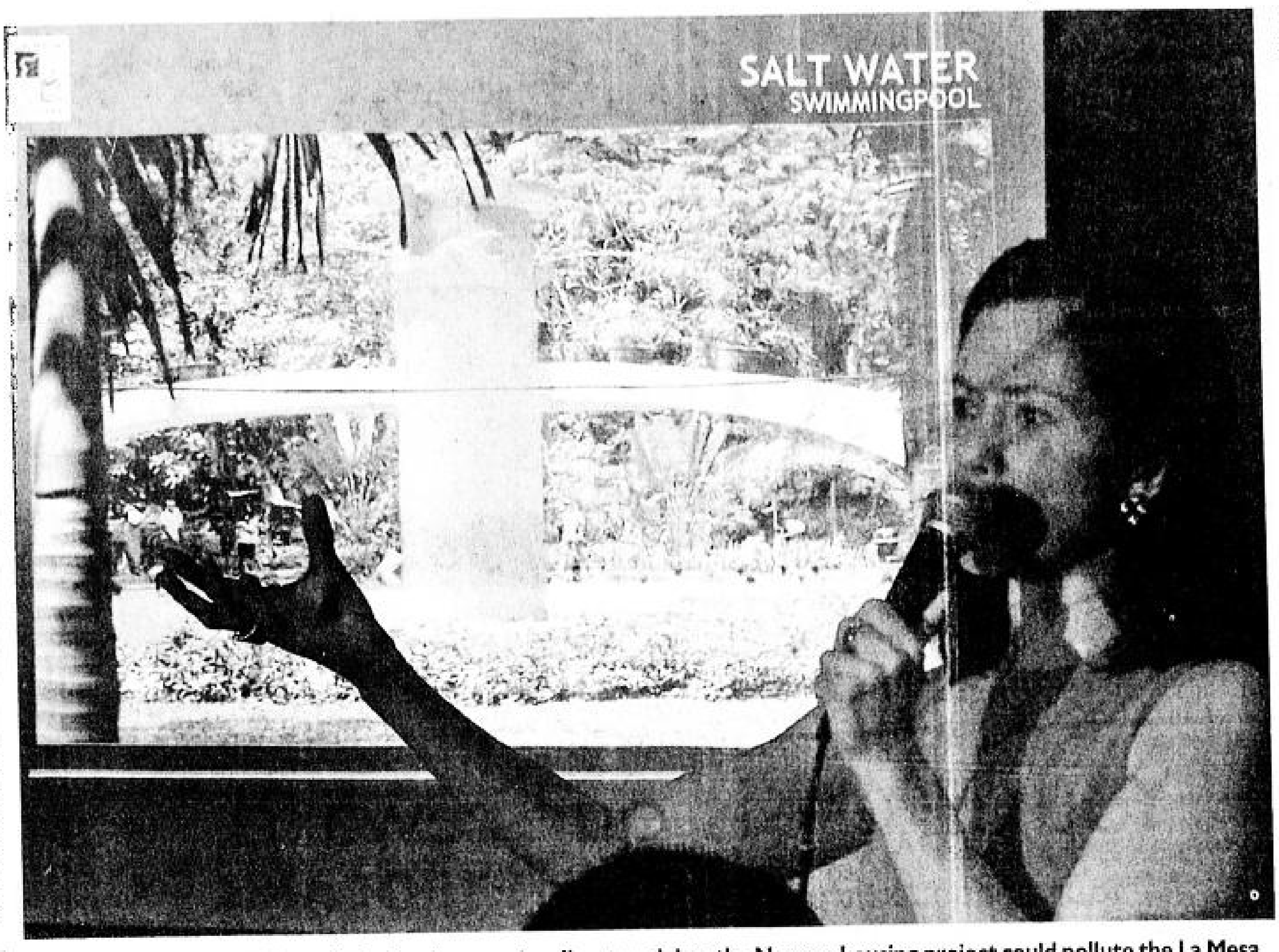
From page A1

portion of the 2,700-hectare watershed to the 1,411 Nawasa employees. They were awarded rights to the land under a collective bargaining agreement with the MWSS management in 1968.

By means of a raffle, beneficiaries were picked from members of two labor unions, the Kaisahan at Kapatiran ng mga Manggagawa sa Kawani sa Nawasa and the Balara Employees and Laborers Association.

The CBA initially allotted an MWSS property "near" La Mesa for the project but "a new site" was later chosen within the watershed, the coalition said in a statement. The agreement then stated that the land would be sold to the unions at "P5.50 per sq.m.," for a total price of P3.19 million.

"The [land] deal, overtaken by events, was only consummated with the turnover of the absolute deed of sale to the claimants in March 2006," the coalition statement said.



GINA Lopez, ABS-CBN Foundation Inc.'s managing director, claims the Nawasa housing project could pollute the La Mesa reservoir. RODEL ROTONI

Possible leaks

A February 2004 study by the UP-based National Hydraulic Research Center, which was commissioned by the MWSS to come up with environmental safety measures for the project, ended up telling the MWSS to scrap it.

"There was no mitigating measure we could recommend for the possible spill of toxic materials" into the reservoir, NHRC Director Leonardo Liongson said at the press conference.

Liongson said the proposed housing project was situated such that "urban wastes" coming from the homes would naturally cascade down the watershed's ridges and collect at the reservoir.

There could be leaks in the sewer lines and treatment tanks caused by earthquakes, he said.

Materials furnished by Bantay Kalikasan quoted the NHRC's recommendation as follows: "It will be in the best interest of MWSS and the general public, who will eventually utilize the water in the La Mesa Reservoir for drinking, that the 58 hectares remain a protected watershed and not be converted to a housing project area."

Lopez noted that Bantay Kalikasan's success in replanting trees in the watershed and transforming parts of it into an eco-tourism haven since 1999 "would be all for naught" if the water quality of La Mesa would be endangered by the housing project.

"For me, this is more than just a watershed but a source of life for the country's nerve center," she said.

The Lopez family used to own majority shares in Maynilad Water Services Inc., one of the two MWSS concessionaires processing water from the La Mesa reservoir for distribution to households.

The Lopez bloc returned its concession to the state-owned MWSS in December 2002 after failing to get the rate increase it was seeking.

Senate inquiry

"There's a maxim in law that goes 'rebus sic stantibus,'" said Bantay Kalikasan operations manager John Paul Balayon. "It basically means that when the circumstances in which a judgment was made have drastically changed by the time that judgment is to be implemented, that prior decision can at least be revisited or at best be totally challenged."

He surmised that at the time legal battles were being waged over the project in the '70s, its potential hazards to the environment were not yet fully appreciated for lack of technologies to measure such impacts.

Sen. Jamby Madrigal, meanwhile, is seeking a Senate investigation into the plan to convert 58 hectares of the La Mesa reservoir into a housing project for MWSS employees.

In a resolution, Madrigal said the planned privatization posed a "clear and imminent danger" to the water supply of Metro Manila, which could be contaminated.

Claims false

House Deputy Majority Leader Edcel Lagman, however, said claims that the MWSS employees' housing project would pollute the La Mesa Dam were false.

Lagman, who has been providing legal advice to the MWSS employees pro bono, said "engineering mitigating measures" would be set in place in the housing project to "foreclose possible pollution of the La Mesa Dam and prevent the despoliation of the area."

He added that Lopez had posed no objection to the housing project in a letter to the MWSS employees in February 2003.

"Many of the awardees are now infirm while others have passed away," Lagman said in a statement, adding that the project had been delayed nearly four decades.

Lagman said the safety measures, set in the deed of absolute sale in favor of the 1,411 awardees, included the following: Construction of flood control and drainage systems, the adoption of a permanent erosion control plan and strict solid waste management.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the MWSS would also monitor the construction of a waste water treatment and sewerage system, Lagman said.

Use leak-free pipes

He said the project would "use leak-free and impermeable sewer pipes" and that there would be a provision that "effluence from septic tanks should not be allowed to leak (leach) into the soil."

He added that trees would also not be cut "without prior permit from DENR and MWSS."

Lagman said that the housing project began in 1968 after employees of Nawasa became its beneficiaries pursuant to a ratified collective bargaining agreement.

However, the deed of absolute sale was only executed last February after succeeding Nawasa and MWSS administrators refused to sign it.

Lagman said the refusal of then Nawasa Administrator Sergio Isada to execute the deed of absolute sale in favor of the awardees reached the Supreme Court, which confirmed on Jan. 17, 1975, the validity of the housing project "and ruled that there was absolutely nothing which remained to be done except the execution of the deed of absolute sale."

"This decision in Isada v. Bocar became final and executory 31 years ago," he said.

Lagman also said the NHRC study, which was completed in February 2004, "did not disallow the development of the housing project but recommended mitigating engineering safeguards to negate any possible pollution of the La Mesa Dam."

MWSS Deputy Administrator Macra Cruz said the project of the Nawasa employees' union which has been pending since the mid-1960s, "would have to be studied well because the drainage could lead to the La Mesa Dam reservoir."

Cruz said that there was a separate housing project for 100 employees and officers of the current MWSS and that for this housing project, the appropriate environment clearance certificate was obtained by the agency ensuring that no waste would go to the reservoir. *With reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana and Christine Gaylican*

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Dry season over soon, says Pagasa

From page A1

Although La Niña is on the wane, Pagasa announced that it expected the first tropical cyclone to affect the country this month.

Already, there are at least a couple of systems—the easterly wave and the inter-tropical convergence zone—causing increased cloudiness and isolated rains that may have dampened summer outings over the weekend in some parts of Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao.

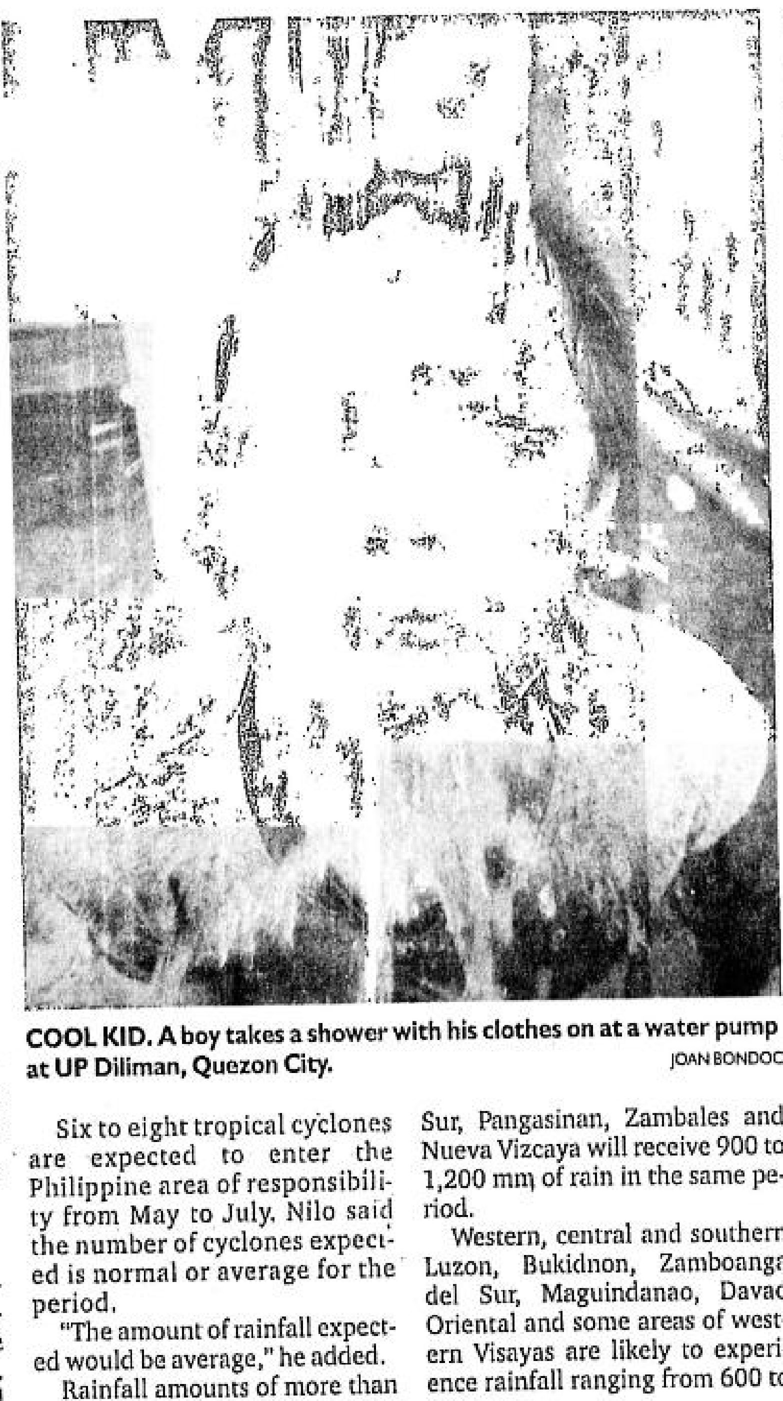
Dr. Flaviana Hilario, chief of Pagasa's climatology and agrometeorology branch, said in a news conference yesterday that one or two tropical cyclones were expected to affect the country this month. Two weather disturbances might affect the country in June and three to four in July.

The amount of rainfall, however, would be average in the next few months. "[We] predict that rainfall for the coming three months will be near normal with the weakening of the La Niña," Hilario said.

In its advisory regarding the end of La Niña, Pagasa said the waning phenomenon had caused a significant decrease in rainfall in most parts of the country in April. Hilario, however, said that the onset of the rainy season beginning this month would change the trend.

Average rainfall expected

"Current seas—surface temperature observations in the central equatorial Pacific—are close to their average or normal values. Neutral conditions are expected in the second half of the year," said Dr. Prisco Nilo, officer in charge of the weather bureau.



COOL KID. A boy takes a shower with his clothes on at a water pump at UP Diliman, Quezon City. JOAN BONDOC

Six to eight tropical cyclones are expected to enter the Philippine area of responsibility from May to July. Nilo said the number of cyclones expected is normal or average for the period.

"The amount of rainfall expected would be average," he added.

Rainfall amounts of more than 1,200 mm are expected over the mountainous areas of Luzon during the May to July period. Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, Zambales and Nueva Vizcaya will receive 900 to 1,200 mm of rain in the same period.

Western, central and southern Luzon, Bukidnon, Zamboanga del Sur, Maguindanao, Davao Oriental and some areas of western Visayas are likely to experience rainfall ranging from 600 to 900 mm.

The rest of the country, including Metro Manila, will receive rainfall of from 300 to 600 mm.

About 20 typhoons hit the Philippine archipelago each year, seven of which cross the country, mostly during the rainy season. Two tropical cyclones have already swept through the Philippines this year.

Mudslides triggered by heavy rains entombed a community of 1,800 in Guinsaugon in Southern Leyte province in February.

Incessant rains since December last year also damaged some crop areas, forcing local feed millers, poultry and livestock firms to import about 217,000 tons of corn since January.

The volume of imports since the start of the year was nearly four times the 55,000 tons of corn bought in 2005.

Rain good for rice

But the increased rainfall this year was good for rice growers.

Gregorio Tan, administrator of the National Food Authority, said ample water for irrigation would enable farmers to plant more and harvest the bulk of the main rice crop early.

The main rice harvest in the Philippines, which accounts for 40-45 percent of annual output, usually occurs in the fourth quarter.

But with good water reserves in dams and irrigation facilities due to La Niña, farmers were expected to plant early and the main harvesting could start in August or September.

"We are still aiming to cut rice imports this year to 1.6 million tons from 1.8 million tons in 2005," Tan said.

The NFA has so far bought 924,375 tons of rice since the start of the year. *With a report from Reuters*

GMA names Ulap head to Neda board

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO has given the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (Ulap), the national group of governors and mayors, a seat on the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) board as part of her continuing reorganization of her economic team.

The President on April 22 signed Administrative Order No. 148 appointing Ulap president Erico Aumentado and seven others to the Neda board replacing five key Cabinet officials—the secretaries of labor, the interior, health, foreign affairs and agrarian reform.

The President in the AO said she was reconstituting the Neda board "to conserve the executive time of Cabinet secretaries by not requiring them to attend more meetings than necessary."

Ms Arroyo had previously created three Cabinet clusters—the Neda Cabinet group or economic team, the National Security Council group and the National Anti-Poverty Commission group—in order to facilitate consultations and her decision-making.

Ulap is emerging as the biggest political force behind the President after it gave her its unwavering support at the height of the "Hello Garci" wiretap scandal and the impeachment complaint against her last year.

Ulap was also the first to broach the people's initiative signature campaign to amend the Constitution after it appeared that Congress was not likely to pull off the constitutional assembly for the purpose and a constitutional convention was not even being considered.

Aside from Ulap, the new members of the Neda board are the secretary of tourism; the chairs of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Commission on Information and Communications Technology and the Subic-Clark Area Development Council, and the presidential advisers on new government centers and jobs creation.

They join the Neda director general who is the vice chair; the secretaries of agriculture, the budget, energy, environment, finance, public works, science and technology, trade and transportation; the deputy governor of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, and the governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Airport limits police access

By Nikko Dizon

MEMBERS OF THE AVIATION SECURITY Group are up in arms against the Manila International Airport Authority for stripping some of them of their airport identity cards and limiting their access to and freedom of movement within the airport.

In a memorandum dated April 26, Miaa security chief Angel Atutubo said not all 500 members of the ASG, which is a unit of the Philippine National Police, were entitled to untrammeled access to the airport and withheld renewal of the airport identification cards of nearly 60 of them.

"Their functions do not merit issuance of the airport ID as these were not operational in nature," Atutubo said, referring to ASG members assigned to office jobs at the ASG headquarters such as Comptroller, Finance, Legal, and Logistics.

Some members of the intelligence and investigation unit of the ASG were among those denied airport access passes. Only 11 officers from the unit would be issued airport access passes, according to documents obtained by the INQUIRER.

Atutubo cited a provision in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for disapproving some of the ASG members' IDs for this year.

"Nonetheless, should there be a need for the HQS personnel to be at the airport on official business, they may avail of the temporary visitor access pass, subject to the regulations on such issuance," Atutubo wrote.

A well-placed ASG source said ASG officials were furious over Atutubo's decision. Many of the officers whose access cards were not renewed hold the rank of superintendent and senior superintendent.

"Even if these officers are doing office jobs right now, they are still part of the ASG tasked to protect and secure the Naia (Ninoy Aquino International Airport)," the source said.

"If anything happens at the airport, say a terrorist attack, all of them would have to respond to the situation," added the source, who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to divulge information to the press.

The PNP-ASG is tasked to secure all the country's airport facilities against "terroristic attacks that threaten civil aviation," according to the law that created the ASG. The Miaa Airport Security Program itself states that the ASG "assumes responsibility in addressing the situation in the event of terrorist, armed, and bomb attacks and aircraft hijackings.

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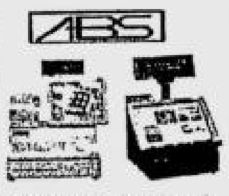

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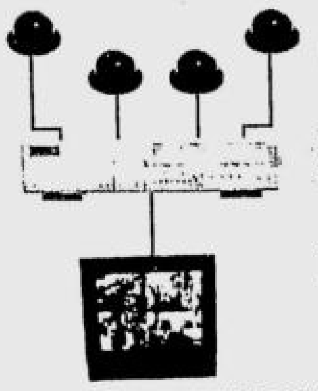

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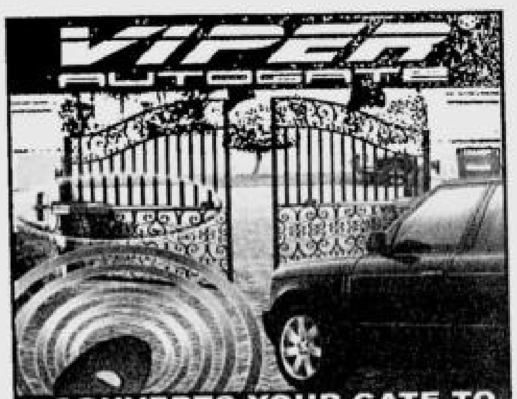

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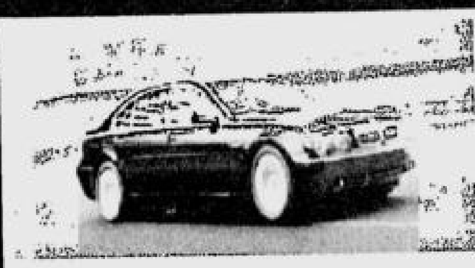

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Pinoy-Swiss strips down to shorts at Naia

By Nikko Dizon

A STOMACH ACHE CAN SEND WRONG signals to the brain. So explained a Filipino-Swiss national who stripped down to his underpants when all he was asked to do during a pre-departure security check at the airport was to take off his shoes.

Records at the PNP's Aviation Security Group showed that Silvio Ronga, 34, of Goteberg, Switzerland, was bound for Singapore late last week when, at the final security check, he was asked to take off his shoes.

Ronga took off his shoes all right, but to screener Alma Soriano's surprise, he stepped out of his short pants as well, "retaining only his cycling shorts and his shirt," according to a report by a unit of the Aviation Security Group.

An officer immediately invited Ronga for questioning, and it was then that an apologetic Ronga explained he had "misunderstood" Soriano's instruction because his stomach was painful and he was "upset during that time."

He showed a medical certificate for his illness, but the report did not specify what it was.

After apologizing orally for his actions, Ronga executed a written apology.

Ronga was allowed to board his Singapore Airlines flight "upon being released in good physical and mental condition" to an airline officer, the report said.

It was the second incident at the Naia this year in which a passenger stripped to his underpants after being asked to remove his shoes.

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Our contact lens solutions safe, says firm

By Christian V. Esguerra

STUNG BY AN EYE INFECTION CONTROVERSY in the United States and parts of Asia, contact lens maker Bausch and Lomb has moved to salvage a similarly important market in the Philippines.

Top officials of the company held a press conference yesterday to assert its local products were safe.

In fact, the product involved—a contact lens care solution called ReNu MoistureLoc—is not available in the Philippines, Raymond Cheng, Bausch and Lomb's commercial director for Hong Kong and the Philippines, said.

The company also received an assurance from Dr. Minguita Padilla, president of the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology, that its local products were safe despite a number of complaints elsewhere.

"We haven't seen any unusual occurrences so there's no need to panic," Padilla said at the press conference.

Bausch and Lomb pulled ReNu MoistureLoc from store shelves in the US, Hong Kong and Singapore, pending the results of the investigation of the cases of fungal keratitis, a corneal infection that could lead to blindness.

Cheng yesterday told Filipino consumers not to use the same product if they got it abroad.

Padilla said only about 35 cases of fungal keratitis are reported every year at the Philippine General Hospital and none of them involve infections resulting from contact lens use.

Even if fungal eye infections are common in humid places like the Philippines, she explained, it is acquired only through trauma from fungus inhabiting the soil and plants.

"Once it gets to the cornea, it's very hard to treat because there's no effective drug yet for fungal keratitis. We have only experimental drugs and they are expensive," she said.

Infectious keratitis resulting from daily contact lens use occurs in only 3.5 to 4 cases out of 10,000, Fan Chi Shing, Bausch and Lomb's professional services manager, said in his presentation.

Still, Padilla urged the public to observe proper hygiene and use contact lenses properly.

She said users should always wash their hands well before handling their lenses and avoid sleeping with them on.

"Sometimes, people are already experiencing eye irritation but they still continue to use their lenses," she said. "Sometimes, too, they take medicine like those with steroids which only make a fungal infection worse."

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JOYRIDE WITH GRANDMA. Eva Victoria Arroyo takes a ride with grandma, President Macapagal-Arroyo, in one of two hybrid cars tested in Malacañang grounds yesterday. The test ride is the President's way of promoting fuel conservation. LYN RILLON

Fugitive American faces deportation

AN AMERICAN WANTED in his country for wire fraud and money laundering has been arrested and is set to be deported, according to the Bureau of Immigration.

The suspect, identified as Robert Leslie Oliver, is undergoing deportation proceedings and is currently held at the bureau's detention center in Bicutan, Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. said.

Oliver was arrested upon the request of the United State Embassy, which informed the bureau of his status as a fugitive. According to the US Embassy, a US district court in Eastern California has already issued a warrant for Oliver's arrest.

No details of Oliver's alleged crime was provided.

Subsequently, Fernandez issued a mission order for the American's arrest.

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For fuel economy, GMA goes hybrid

By Christine O. Avendaño

IF YOU SEE A SLEEK LIGHT BLUE Toyota Prius zooming by as part of the presidential convoy in the next few days, it's President Macapagal-Arroyo promoting energy conservation in these times of spiraling oil prices.

In their continued search for ways to conserve energy amid the high oil prices, energy officials presented two "hybrid" cars to Ms Arroyo yesterday and informed her that the vehicles were not only economical but environment-friendly as well.

A hybrid vehicle is one that combines a gasoline-powered engine with an electric motor to increase gas mileage and help lower emissions.

After test rides in both the Toyota Prius and Honda Civic Hybrid with granddaughter Eva Victoria in tow, the President told Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla she was reclaiming the Toyota Prius, which had been donated to the Chief Executive by Toyota Corp. some three years ago.

Lotilla had kept the vehicle for his use "most of his time," an aide said.

Lotilla said the use of hybrid vehicles could generate gas savings of at least 30 percent. While conventional vehicles can run for about 9 kilometers per liter of gasoline, hybrid cars run for about 13 kilometers per liter.

"(The President) said she is taking back the car from me. She would be able to use it now where it would be appropriate," Lotilla told reporters.

Lotilla said that the President intends to promote energy conservation by using the car, which happens to cost P1.5 million.

He said the government was encouraging those who can afford the vehicles to use them "as their contribution to the economy as a whole."

"Besides, it is also good for the environment because it uses less fuel," Lotilla said.

Hybrid cars cost about half a million pesos more than conventional vehicles. They are not yet on sale in the country but may be imported.

Since these cars are expensive, Lotilla said Ms Arroyo has reduced tariffs on spare parts of hybrid cars as well as of vehicles that run on alternative fuels such as compressed natural gas (CNG).

Mario Marasigan, director of the Energy Utilization Management Bureau, said import tariffs on such spare parts were reduced from 30 percent to 1 percent early this year.

Lotilla said that the President and the Cabinet were expected yesterday to tackle proposals "for further reduction of tariff and excise taxes on hybrid vehicles and all other alternative fuels."

Marasigan said the House of Representatives was deliberating on a bill to reduce or eliminate excise taxes on hybrid vehicles as well as those that run on alternative fuels. He said the government was promoting the local manufacture of flexible-fuel cars as well as alternative fuels for export to the Asean region.

Ford has a plan to locally produce flexible-fueled vehicles with an initial investment of P1 billion, Marasigan said.

Honda has also informed him it would be able to provide flexible-fueled cars locally by just making "some minor changes in the engine and some parts of their regular or conventional vehicles."

Now that the President is taking back the Toyota Prius, Lotilla still has the Honda Civic Hybrid, which Honda Corp loaned to the DOE for one year for demonstration as well as for the government's information and education campaign on energy conservation.

Kidnap cases up by 70%

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

KIDNAP FOR RANSOM CASES rose by 70 percent in the first four months of this year compared with the same period last year, a senior police official said yesterday.

A total of 17 KFR cases were reported from January to April this year compared to only 10 in the same period last year.

Senior Supt. Prudencio Banas, deputy operations chief of the Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response [Pacer], blamed the rise in KFR incidents to the police's preoccupation with destabilization threats and antigovernment protests.

"Kidnappers take advantage of [political] destabilization threats when the focus of authorities are on [antigovernment forces]. [Kidnapping] incidents rise," he said.

Banas, however, said the increase in kidnapping cases was not yet a cause for alarm.

"Not really. We hope to bring the cases down to the lowest level," he said.

But Banas admitted there are still some KFR cases that were not reported to authorities.

Anti-crime groups have claimed that many kidnappings go unreported because victims are reluctant to report the crimes as they suspect rogue policemen are involved.

Banas noted that most victims this year were Indian nationals engaged in making loans to small businessmen.

"They are kidnapped and released on the same day, sometimes only for P60,000 as ransom," Banas said.

Such Indian businessmen usually negotiate the loans and collect the payments personally, making them vulnerable to abduction.

Banas said "small-time" kidnap gangs prey on these Indian nationals.

So far, he said, only one case has been reported to Pacer, but they estimate that several Indian businessmen could have already fallen victims to these kidnap gangs.

He said the kidnappings were likely prompted by "business rivalry." "That's our assessment," he said without elaborating.

Kidnap for ransom gangs operating in Manila and in nearby areas, often target businessmen, foreigners and members of the wealthy ethnic Chinese community.

In 2005, a total of 50 kidnapping cases were reported, according to Banas. In 2004, 29 kidnap cases were reported, the lowest in record.

By end-March this year, 12 KFR cases were reported to the police. This means that five more kidnappings took place last month. *With AFP*

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•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 /
528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.
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EDITORIAL

A CIGARETTE VENDOR WAS QUOTED BY reporters as remarking that the May 1 rallies last Monday were the most peaceful in recent memory. And indeed they were. Perhaps this was a case where the extreme summer heat and an instinctive sense of solidarity among policemen and protesters, all of whom belong to the same working class, triumphed over the aggressive pre-May 1 statements of both sides. A palpable sense of dread was quickly displaced on that day by confidence-building signs that, with clear legal parameters imposed on the behavior of police and protesters, both sides could get something, while avoiding a suicidal effort to try to get everything.

In the end, the police displayed a disciplined yet restrained deportment, while protesters comported themselves with dignity and reasonableness. In a society composed of contending forces, not everyone can get everything they want, but more often than not, some sort of compromise can be reached. Indeed, compromise was the paramount lesson gained that day.

For a country such as ours, where efforts at compromise have been swept aside by a winner-take-all mentality toward the political crisis, to see compromise at work seems a relief. And yet it is well to ask why only now have officialdom and the citizenry managed to avoid angry, even bloody, confrontations. The reason is that despite its best efforts to the contrary, the government has been forced to recognize limits on its desires.

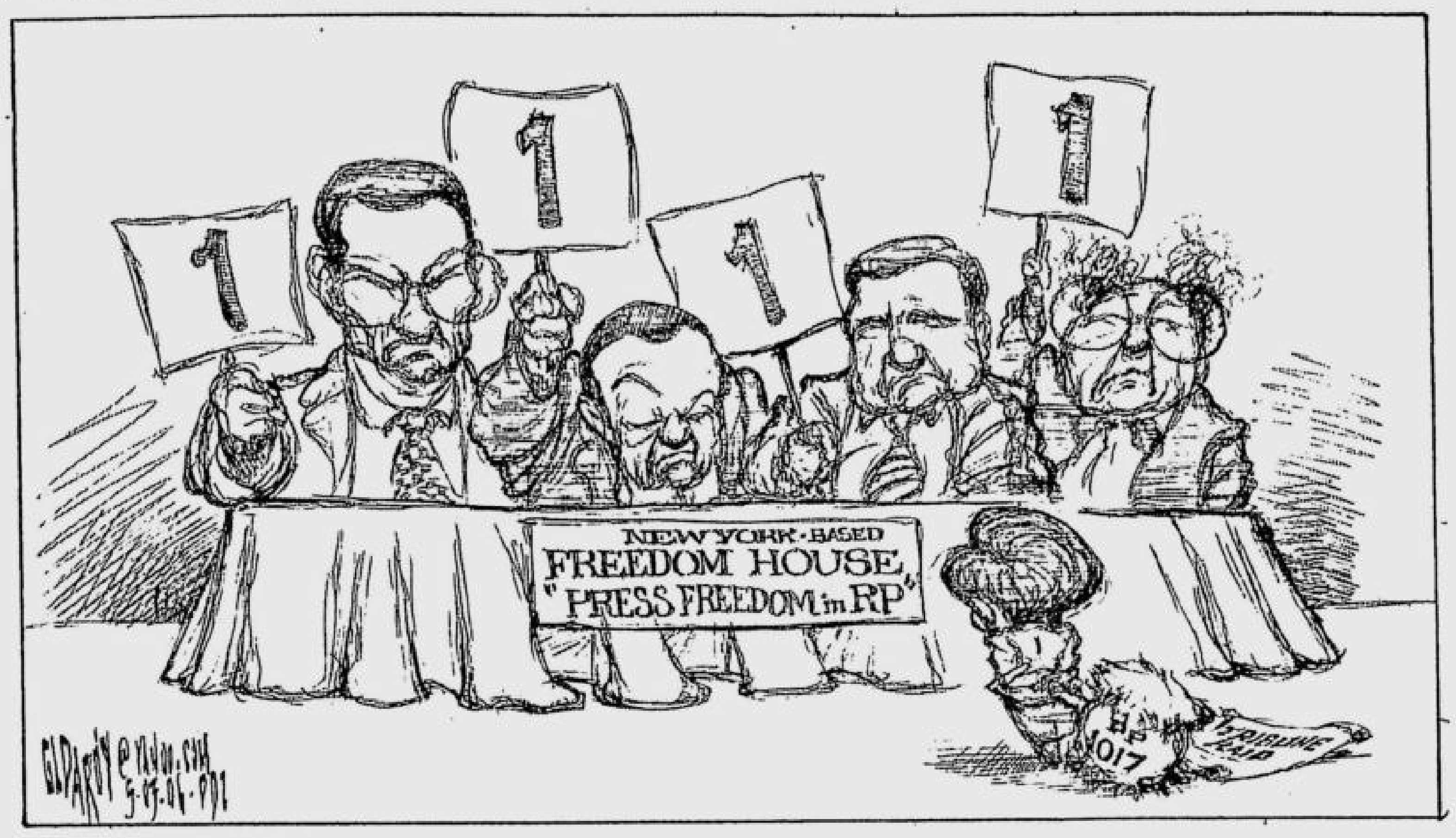
Since calibrated preemptive response replaced maximum tolerance as official policy, and until CPR was officially reversed, it was the government's practice to respond to all manifestations of dissent with overwhelming force. Demonstrations of force naturally impelled critics of the government to pursue a relentless, uncompromising opposition to official policy. But when the official policy was overturned by the Supreme Court, everyone—the police and the protesters, especially—could return to the familiar. And the familiar involves the give-and-take, the dialogue and compromise that have generally characterized protests and official reactions to them for over two decades.

The push and pull democracy naturally entails, whether in the halls of the legislature or in the streets, requires many things to work. Among the most important are: mutually accepted and followed regulations, and a sense that neither side will exercise power merely for the sake of proving that power. Had CPR, for example, still been the government's response to all expressions of dissent, we would have seen phalanxes of policemen being ordered to charge, assault and arrest the ralliers. And the ralliers, intent on demonstrating their displeasure with the state, would have fought back. No CPR, no reason to fight—tolerance, after all, breeds tolerance, just as repression foments resistance.

If the administration can be characterized as having a pragmatic attitude toward the rule of law—the rule of law being basically what it says it is—then the country should be thankful that the public at large, given the smallest chance, will naturally find a humane balance. The Supreme Court's reversal of CPR could be said to have had a beneficial kind of chilling effect: it immediately removed a bone of contention, allowing cooler heads to prevail. That's in contrast to the kind of chilling effect CPR had, which made people freeze in their tracks and inspired many to vow to resist the policy.

We can imagine the bruises and confrontations that could have been avoided had CPR not been issued at all; or, the sense of relief and return to normal political behavior that could have taken place had challenges to the CPR in court been attended to sooner. Obviously, the administration never wanted the day to come when the Court would render its verdict on CPR. Up to the last minute on May 1, the government insisted there would be trouble, and violence. Was it insecurity, or a runaway sense of belligerency? Was it even, perhaps, wishful thinking?

Whatever the psychological or political reasons, the fact remains that all's well that ends well. With no CPR to fall back on, the police are once more open to dialogue, and, we hope, demonstrators can once more be confident that dialogue will be welcomed.



Higher pay and fewer jobs?

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

EVERY LABOR DAY, WITHOUT FAIL, ORGANIZED labor asks for mandatory increases in the minimum wage to keep up with the rise in prices of basic commodities. This year, they asked for a P125 increase in the daily wage.

With the rise in prices, all workers—not only minimum wage earners—do need pay increases. However, legislated minimum wage increases do not solve the problem. On the contrary, they worsen it. Here's why:

Mandatory pay hikes contribute to the rise in the inflation rate. After a mass pay increase, the prices of goods rise, a natural effect. If a struggling company is forced to increase wages, it is also forced to raise the prices of its goods to get back what it will pay out to its workers. Also, when you put more spending money in the hands of consumers, there is a corresponding demand for more goods. And by the law of supply and demand, the prices of goods rise.

Of course, it can be said that the wage increase that our minimum wage earners get is needed by them to keep body and soul together, not to spend for luxuries. Still, the effect on the economy is the same. That is one reason the inflation rate in the Philippines goes up very fast. Politicians pass a law increasing the minimum wage to court the votes of the labor sector. In other words, the increase becomes a mirage. The worker gets more money but he can hardly buy more with them.

It is different when increases are given on a selective basis, when the company income and/or profit increase and the owner is not too greedy to pocket everything but decides to share them with his workers.

There's a more ironic problem associated with mandatory wage increases. When a struggling company is forced by law to give increases it cannot afford, it is forced to lay off some workers or, worse, to close shop, throwing workers out of jobs.

This problem was tossed to labor leaders at the Kapihan sa Manila breakfast forum last Monday: What would they rather have, fewer workers receiving higher salaries, or more workers with lower pay?

To a man, the labor leaders—Elmer Labog of Kilusang Mayo Uno, Leody de Guzman of Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino and Dennis Maga of the Free Ka Bel Movement—replied that they would choose the higher salaries.

Is it because the labor leaders and their lawyers get a percentage of the total wage increases their workers get? they were asked. Of course, they answered "No." It is because the workers deserve it, they said.

They could hardly be expected to reply otherwise. Nevertheless, the reality is that many companies have already downsized or closed shop because they could no longer afford to give wage hikes mandated by law. The situation can be likened to a pie, which stands for a company's payroll. If you divide it into smaller portions, you can give more workers one slice each. But if you make the slices bigger, those who get them would be able to eat more but many others won't get any. That is the dilemma that faces organized labor now: bigger wages = fewer jobs; smaller wages = more jobs.

Those who have jobs are lucky: they already have jobs but would still get pay hikes and therefore would not be hurt much by the resulting inflation. But what about those who have no jobs or would lose their jobs? They would have to pay the same high prices as those who are employed. Aren't the employed being selfish when they insist on wage increases, when such increases may result in the layoff of some of their brother workers? (Of course, there are companies which can afford to and should give pay increases but don't. The owners of these companies should burn in hell.)

In their obsession with salary increases, labor leaders forget one more serious problem: the slowness of the National Labor Relations Commission and the Court of Appeals and Supreme Court in deciding labor disputes. Even such simple cases as illegal dismissals take many years to resolve. Remember that while a case is pending, the litigant worker usually has no job and no income to feed his family. A worker who sues his employer has a very difficult time finding another job. Other employers treat him as a pariah, regard him as a "troublemaker" and refuse to hire him.

Of course, if the worker wins his case, he would get all his back wages plus damages, but we have a saying in Filipino: *"Aanhin pa ang damo kung patay na ang kabayo?"* (What will you do with the grass when the horse is already dead?) Our justice system envisions the worker to have more in law. The employer has all the resources, time and high-priced lawyers to take care of himself. The worker only has the freelance labor lawyer, who gets paid only when he wins a case.

Our lawmakers devised the arbiter system to make the resolution of disputes faster. Still labor cases take years to resolve. Many employers purposely delay the process to starve out the workers and force them to lose interest or run out of time and money and give up, or force them to accept lesser settlements. And some arbiters and NLRC commissioners are wiling accomplices. Employers often spend their money to bribe arbiters and commissioners to decide in their favor rather than use the same money to pay their employees. Sometimes even the lawyers of the workers are bought to lose the case.

This is not rare in the NLRC. Ask the NLRC employees, ask the lawyers—for labor or for management—who practice there, ask the workers who have cases there.

The Supreme Court and the Department of Labor and Employment should watch how slowly the wheels of justice turn in the NLRC.

Tail wagging the dog

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

BEFORE LABOR DAY LAST MONDAY, MIKE Defensor and Raul Gonzalez were shrilly warning that if the rallies turned violent, or if they took on the aspect of an attempt to unseat GMA, she would re-impose 1017.

Rodolfo Biazon and several other senators were quick to point out exactly what was wrong with that. "If they again proclaim PP 1017 and mount illegal acts, such as warrantless arrests," he said, "they can be held accountable in the future. Remember PP 1017 did not give additional powers to the President."

Nene Pimentel threw in an unsolicited advice to go with his analysis: "Gloria is building straw men and shadow-boxing, hoping to scare off people. My advice: Go jump into Manila Bay. Bring JDV with you."

They've got a point. At the very least, what all those warnings showed is that government has entered into a delusional, paranoid or state-of-siege mentality seeing a coup under every bed, or rally. The people who proposed to march last Monday all assured they would keep their rallies peaceful. They had no plan to mount a coup, or be used in one (in this country that is advertised well in advance, particularly in these unique times when the coup plotters expect the people to rally behind them rather than oppose them). They had no plan to engage the police in bloody confrontations (in this country that is advertised well in advance, too, to embolden the weak of heart to undergo a political quadruple bypass).

Of course, the demonstrators did advertise well before hand that they were going to "retake Mendiola." For the activists Mendiola has always been the political Holy Land, to fight ardently for because of its ideological rather than strategic value. For the Erap supporters, that was the site of the climax of "Edsa III." The retaking of Mendiola would have been a coup in the symbolic sense, but it would not have been a coup in the physical sense. It would have been a coup in the ideological sense, but it would not have been a coup in the military sense. There is a difference.

In fact, the ones who implicitly proposed to turn the rallies violent were the authorities themselves. You saw the cops on TV training for a pitched battle with demonstrators, the ones acting the part of demonstrators attacking the defenders of the faith, forcing them to fight back with shield and truncheon.

The point of that exercise clearly was not to prepare the cops' bodies for the impending ordeal but to condition the public's mind for an impending "orgy of violence," a phrase government officials love to use. The idea was to scare people off the rallies, notwithstanding that the Supreme Court had just junked CPR, under which cover Vidal Querol had been fomenting violence in the streets, or to justify whatever new atrocities GMA planned to unleash on a now very suspecting public.

But more than that, what Malacañang's threat to re-impose 1017 shows yet again is that the biggest headache of this country is GMA herself.

Frankly, I don't know that anyone is still frightened of GMA threatening to declare 1017 or even outright martial law. The first time she did it, the public was taken aback because it never really expected it. Today, the element of surprise is gone. Everyone knows now GMA can never really seriously attempt it because, one, more than Marcos, she is near-universally detested by the people (Marcos at least had the Ilocanos rooting for him), and two, less than Marcos, she does not control the one institution she expects to control seething unrest, which is the military. This is a case where the threat is more powerful than the execution. Or more plainly where the dog barks more than it bites.

But more to the point, I do not recall any leader (I refuse to say president) of this country since 1986 ever regarding rallies on May 1 or any other day as constituting a dire threat against the duly constituted authority. (The last thing GMA may claim is duly constituted.) I do not recall any leader of this country since 1986 fearing an overthrow every time people gather in the streets, or at the Edsa Shrine, expecting (rightly) that the people would not only move to stop a coup but would gladly join it. (Her motto, quite unlike Christ's, is: "Whenever two or three of you are gathered against my name, there I am ready to scuttle you.") Indeed, I do not recall any ruler in this country since 1986 seeing popular unrest as a sign that the people are wrong and the ruler is right, and that everything must be done to stamp out protest to keep the ruler in power. (Erap at least had the decency to resign when faced with Edsa II.)

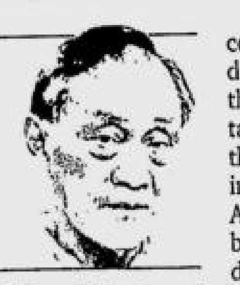
Do we really need someone like that? It's more trouble than anyone is worth, even a duly constituted president—and GMA isn't even one. It's the tail wagging the dog, an entire country being turned upside down to keep a fake president in power. It thoroughly refutes the argument that ousting GMA won't solve anything. In fact, it will solve everything, or close to everything.

We remove GMA (through snap elections) and we can have a legitimate leader who will not roll out the barbed wire around Malacañang every time the workers and activists vow to "retake Mendiola," who will not threaten to plunge the country into dictatorship to keep an irate populace at bay, who will not devote all her waking hours to devising stratagems, including telling the people she gets her marching orders from God and not from them, forgetting *vox populi, vox Dei*, the voice of the people is the voice of God, to keep power forever. We remove GMA and we can all breathe.

Have we become a race of fools? It's time the dog wagged the tail. Or better still, it's time it flicked its tail to swat the fly that's been persecuting it.

A revival of the Mendiola tradition

ANALYSIS



Amando Doronila

THE FILIPINO LABOR UNION MOVEMENT reclaimed its historic role as the shock force of social protest in the country last Monday when it shifted the venue of its May Day demonstration to Recto Street, within striking distance of heavily bunkered Malacañang Palace.

Although a phalanx of riot police blocked the march of about 7,000 workers and peasants coming from many parts of Luzon from crossing the "no-man's land" of Mendiola bridge, their focus on Mendiola sent the clear message that the Filipino working class had regained the initiative of being the spearhead of political and social protest movements from the middle classes which had dominated the anti-government protests over the past two decades since the 1986 People Power Revolution.

The labor unions and May Day organizers pointedly ignored middle-class participation in last Monday's protests. The shift of the epicenter of the marches from Edsa to Mendiola was resonant with social and ideological overtones.

It might as well be that the members of the middle class stayed in the background last Monday, where they could not be hurt, since their presence in the streets would have been irrelevant and would have not promoted working class interests. Edsa is the middle-class terrain for their movements that have been camouflaged by so-called "prayer meetings" in tandem with Catholic bishops.

On the other hand, Mendiola is the historical marker of political and social protest actions, heavily laden with radical ideological issues and marked with violent and sometimes bloody clashes between protesters and police state power.

In shifting the venue of their marches to Mendiola, the working class and the Left implicitly declared they were taking a path to political and social change in the Philippines different from that of the Edsa-oriented middle class. Last Monday was therefore a reiteration by the Left that its forces, no matter how fractured they were ideologically, had nothing to do with Edsa-type people power movements, that they would not be part of any "tactical alliance" with the Edsa militants and that they would not be used further as the organizational arm of middle-class political movements.

Last Monday was therefore the Left's declaration of separation from middle-class movements and of intentions. If the leftists seek to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo, it would be on their own terms and methods, and not dependent on the middle class for success.

This is why, the government of President Arroyo is misreading the situation when it links the Left to multi-class coup conspiracies. There is nothing more incompatible, for example, than for the Left to be involved in coup plots with mutinous soldiers, the historical enemies of the Left.

Leaders of the Left have declared that they would push their demands for a P125 wage increase across the board (a predictable demand serving working class economic interests) and press for the removal of President Arroyo, in their own way. Although the middle class and the Left share a political objective, which is the ouster of Ms Arroyo, their approaches are different.

Mendiola and Edsa belong to two different, if not incompatible, political traditions of social protests. Mendiola's tradition is confrontational and conflict-driven. The Edsa tradition shuns violence and is built on the notion that people power can achieve political change and topple governments without shedding a drop of blood.

The public tends to overlook the fact that the baptism of fire of the First Quarter Storm of January 1970, the first street revolt against the Marcos dictatorship, took place in the Battle of Mendiola on Jan. 30, 1970. The battle took place three days after Left-led protesters physically attacked President Marcos and Imelda Marcos as they made their way out of the Legislative Building, after he had delivered his State of the Nation Address on Jan. 26. The attack marked the outbreak of the First Quarter Storm staged by students who rode the wave of a world-wide student rebellion against their political establishments.

The attack on Marcos marked a turning point in Philippine history, ending the mutual civility of elite leaders in their periodic and regular alternating occupancy of political power. It ushered in a turbulent stage of Philippine politics, culminating in the declaration of martial law by Marcos.

The second battle of the First Quarter Storm broke out in the evening of Jan. 30 on Mendiola when waves of student protesters, numbering at least 50,000 and converging from Recto Avenue, poured into Mendiola and stormed Malacañang. They seized a fire engine and rammed Gate 4, opening a breach into which students poured, invading the Palace grounds.

Military reinforcements from Central Luzon were called in to drive out the protesters. The battle spread to Mendiola, where troops fired live bullets, wounding a number of protesters.

Years later, on May 1, 2001, the Mendiola tradition was revived when followers of deposed President Joseph Estrada among the urban poor stormed Malacañang in a rebellion over his arrest on plunder charges. It was the first departure of protests from the Edsa-type people power movement. The May 1 rebellion does not fit into the category of the Edsa I and II people power. It is therefore inaccurate to call it Edsa III.

It is the Mendiola revolt of the First Quarter Storm on which the Mendiola tradition is built and with which the Left and the working class identify. It is the tradition which the Arroyo regime fears more than the Edsa people power movements, which the President can manipulate.

Assembly, speech and public order

COMMENTARY

Fr. Ranhilio Callangan Aquino

MOST REPORTS ON THE SUPREME COURT'S judgment on the case questioning the government's position—infelicitously called "calculated preemptive response" (CPR)—proclaim a defeat to the government. I think the government scored more points than did the petitioners in this case.

The Court found CPR to mean nothing more than "maximum tolerance" about which there can be no constitutional dispute. CPR therefore serves no useful purpose but merely confounds what BP 880 already makes clear: that law enforcers are bound to exercise the highest degree of restraint. Is superfluity unconstitutional? Insofar as CPR may be ascribed a meaning in violation of the rights of assembly and speech beyond maximum tolerance, it is held unconstitutional.

The petitioners, it must not be forgotten, had asked the Supreme Court to void Batas Pambansa 880. It was labeled a Marcos-era, repressive piece of autocrat's dictate. Very importantly, the Supreme Court upheld its constitutionality.

It should also be remembered that Chair Purificacion V. Quisumbing of the Commission on Human Rights was chided for insisting that all—ralliers and law enforcers alike—fall back on BP 880. It turns out, she was right!

Quite instructively, the Court, through Justice Adolf Azcuna, invites attention to Reyes v. Bagatsing (a case argued for the revered J.B.L. Reyes and his group by the late, lamented Haydee Yorac): The philosophical premise of the freedoms of speech and association so jealously and zealously guarded is the belief in reason as the final arbiter of social disagreements and as the key to rationally motivated consensus. This is not dogma. It is a philosophical position and, as such, subject to debate that we can put off for another piece. The point is that those who claim to speak for free speech and assembly do so often with the fanaticism that refuses to examine premises and presuppositions.

Acutely, the Court observes that BP 880 is a virtual enactment in legislative form of the Court's decision in Bagatsing. That is the same thing as saying that it is constitutional.

> Is a permit needed for public rallies? The answer is a clear yes... Can a permit be denied? Yes, if the mayor has clear and convincing evidence that the assembly constitutes a clear and present danger to public order

The Court is unmistakable about basic points. To claim that the government has been dealt a blow, or that ralliers and their organizers have prevailed is to be deliberately misleading. Is a permit needed for public rallies? The answer is a clear yes, unless the rally or meeting takes place in a freedom park designated by law or ordinance. Can a permit be denied? Yes, if the mayor has clear and convincing evidence that the assembly constitutes a clear and present danger to public order, public safety, public convenience, public health or public morals. Otherwise, he must grant the permit. Once more there are standards, and so while the mayor exercises discretion, his exercise of discretion is subject to judicial review when gravely abused.

There seem to be two standards proposed to the mayor who must decide on whether to issue or to withhold the permit: the "clear and present danger rule" and the "imminent danger of grave and substantive evil rule." No matter the notoriety of the law about reading distinctions and qualifications in what, to the layperson is something rather straightforward, the Court holds that the two rules are identical. The mayor is aided by the surfeit of terms: Does the proposed assembly pose a clear and present danger? Does it pose an imminent danger of great and substantive evil? Is the evil truly great or substantive—or is the administration merely annoyed by criticism?

The mayor cannot dilly-dally about ruling on the application of a permit. When he does so, then the ralliers may take to the streets, armed with their application for a permit thus far not acted on. The burden of proof then shifts. It will not be for the ralliers to prove that they were granted a permit, but for those who seek to disperse them to prove that they were denied one. Inaction is not denial. The mayor has 24 hours within which to act on an application for a permit.

The government cannot frustrate the law by refusing to name freedom parks. Where none has been named, the Supreme Court declares all public parks and plazas of the municipality as freedom parks.

Fortunately for me, Mendiola is not a public park or plaza. Not that I dislike rallies, although many of them do turn me off. I teach at Mendiola and am severely inconvenienced by police barricades!

Fr. Ranhilio Callangan Aquino is dean of the Graduate School of Law of San Beda College.

Aguinaldo's military orders

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

READERS WHO ARE BORED WITH THIS SERIES on Emilio Aguinaldo's military orders will have to bear with just one more.

Most readers are more interested in personal details found in the archival materials, like Antonio Luna's silk shorts and the curling irons he used for his moustache, Emilio Aguinaldo's shopping list in Hong Kong, or the personal effects Apolinario Mabini listed in his last will and testament. These details, which are overlooked and often shunned as "trivial" by constipated academics, actually shed light on what our heroes of stone and bronze were like as real people. I think that Aguinaldo's military orders flesh out and complete our picture of the Revolution and the Filipino-American War.

While going over the biggest volume of J.R.M. Taylor's "The Philippine Insurrection Against the United States," I came across a copy of part of the telegraphic communication Aguinaldo had with his field commanders. The material that follows is the exchange between Aguinaldo (*The President*) and General Concepcion (*Reply*), which reminded me of the chat rooms we see on TV and the Internet today. Since the archival material can never be complete, our history is incomplete, but I wonder about the records for the present century. Everything is so ephemeral. Fewer and fewer people are writing letters by hand and using the postal service, all because of word processing, e-mail, and texting. What records will a future historian have for our century?

At least we have copies of Aguinaldo's telegraphic exchanges in 1899. Reading this in English, we are twice removed from the original Spanish and, of course, the Tagalog that Aguinaldo probably dictated to his secretary for transmittal to the field. The correspondence was sent from the headquarters in Tarlac on Sept. 28, 1899:

President: Where is General San Miguel and his column?

Reply: In the same place, occupying the same outposts.

President: Has an attack been made in that part?

Reply: Not on the railway, [but] on Magalang. Firing ceased half an hour ago.

President: Have our forces made no attack towards Angeles in view of attack on Magalang?

Reply: No, I am awaiting the cavalry to get information on that.

President: Do you still need the Cauit Battalion to go to that place?

Reply: I believe that is absolutely necessary that the Cauit Battalion should come to prevent surprise in the fields of the theater of operations, and in case you send it, a fervid address should be made to them so that they come animated with the best desires.

President: If that is so, it will reach there this same afternoon about four o'clock. Besides [what] your good sense [may dictate], I recommend you add more instructions to said battalion so that they may fight well, and don't forget my instructions with respect to defending the right flank and the one in front, all incognito, that is to say, using deceit to attract the enemy and gather them in front of Paruao bridge. In case the enemy's vanguard that passes here from said bridge is a small force, they may be allowed to pass in groups of two or three companies, so that the victory may be the more clever besides animating the people in case you surround and capture them. I think that with your bayonets and the butt-ends of your muskets, you can cut them off and capture them. Those on our right flank together with the rearguard may fire on them, etc., or whatever you may deem expedient. I have already given marching orders to the battalion, with expectations of your thorough sympathy with it. They are very happy and animated.

Reply: I have to compliment you on your very pertinent advice and I shall endeavor in every possible way to respond to your desires, which are those of the country. This morning's attack is perhaps the result of the desire of the enemy to extend his reconnaissance into Magalang, or a feint to turn us from the right direction. I am on the alert to grasp all details, and to be able to act when the moment comes, with true knowledge of the cause of any important new event that may occur, you shall have a true report.

President: Thanks, and I hope, as I always hope, that you will be the first who shall give victory in favor of our country, whenever you reach that murdering line of Americans. And I reiterate: establish no guards other than patrols, in order to prevent the enemy's knowing about this by means of his spies. Except as a last resort should the enemy attack us, only show each one his respective post and line of retreat. In case of necessity, concentrate on the Cutcut river, or whatever you may deem expedient. In regard to all these instructions, I am well aware that you know I have only advised, for you are more of a soldier than I.

Reply: I appreciate the unmerited sentiments you have formed about me, and I only wait for an opportunity to be able to show you by deeds the outcome of my scant knowledge. You can remain assured that all your orders shall be duly executed in all [its] parts, and if any doubt should occur to me, I shall consult you in due time.

President: Thanks. If there is nothing else I can do, I will take leave.

Reply: At your orders, Goodbye.

Perhaps a military historian from the Philippine Military Academy can go over these rarely read papers and write a new history of the Filipino-American War.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

'Probinsya'

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

TWO OF MY FORMER WORK COLLEAGUES IN AN NGO here in Manila have packed up and are returning to the *probinsya*, with hopes of carving out a better life.

I'm sure that sounds very strange, considering that in the Philippines, "probinsya" means a place that's less developed, even "backward." Generally, that means any place outside Metro Manila, so that even a huge and bustling metropolis like Cebu might still be *probinsya*.

The upper classes will use the English word, as in, "Are you going home to the province this Holy Week?" In this case, "province" has positive connotations: a hometown to return to, with beaches and a more sedate pace of life.

Yet even a home province is seen only as a second home. Many of our urbanites would cringe at the very thought of living there. Holy Week's fine, but not much longer than that. The fact is that *probinsya*, even in its most positive sense, still implies a standard of living several notches below that of life in the city.

My NGO colleagues' idea of returning to a *probinsya* seems terribly anachronistic; after all, everyone seems to be wanting to move to Metro Manila, or overseas. But their move did get me thinking hard about how our attitudes to *probinsya* may reflect a very serious defect in the way we look at national development.

'Promdi'

In the last 100 years or so, from the American colonial period onwards, we've equated the country's future with urban development, while neglecting rural areas. *Probinsya* now means being stuck in poverty and over the years, this view has developed into the idea that anyone who stays in the *probinsya* is probably not smart enough for the city.

About 20 years ago, the term "*promdi*" was coined, capturing the snobbish attitudes people had developed toward rural areas. Promdi meant "*prom di province*," a close equivalent of the English "country bumpkin."

The neglect of rural development has worsened through the years. About three weeks ago, a top official of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) spoke at a press conference on the development outlook for the Philippines and observed, with undisguised alarm in his voice, how we were paying too much attention to the development of call centers, while forgetting that we are still a predominantly agricultural country and that we need to develop the agriculture sector.

He was right. Even in the smallest towns, I now see advertisements from diploma mills offering to train people for call centers, or for export as caregivers. Yet, last Sunday's INQUIRER had a special feature on the job market, and it showed how agribusiness still leads in terms of potential jobs, ranking higher than cyberservices (which includes call centers) and tourism.

Primate city

I'm afraid the potentials in agribusiness will go to waste, simply because agriculture is seen, like *probinsya*, as backward. It didn't help that during the American colonial period, our educational system put down farming and created the idea that the way to social advancement was through white collar jobs. Why dirty your hands in farming when you could make money as a government clerk? (At that time, you could live quite comfortably on a low-ranking civil servant's salary, and without necessarily becoming corrupt.)

Prof. Felipe Jocano, in a recent lecture at the University of the Philippines, pointed out how the song "Planting rice is never fun" reinforced our bias against agriculture. In its original Tagalog, "*magtanim ay di biro*" simply referred to how difficult it was to farm, but the English translation went a step further to depict farming as totally undesirable.

But even as we abandoned rural development, we made another big mistake and this was to equate urban development with that of Metro Manila. It was almost as if no other cities existed. Metro Manila was The Primate City. All roads led to Manila, literally (just look at our airline routes).

Many of our neighbors chose a different path, one of developing several urban centers. Even more importantly, the cities' development was tied to those of adjoining rural areas. Thailand is a good example, where the government poured resources into helping farmers to increase their agricultural yields while connecting the farms to markets in urban centers.

In the Philippines, the rural areas were and still are seen mainly as areas for extraction of wealth, as Manila-based landlords lived off agricultural produce from their tenants.

New roots

Today, there are new potentials in rural areas, around, agribusiness and tourism. And the national government is bent on developing the mining industry.

But I also have fears about the way we will develop rural areas around agribusiness, tourism and especially mining. If we continue to look at rural areas mainly as places from which we extract wealth, we will see a worsening of rural poverty. Big businesses will rake in huge profits and leave nothing but destroyed environments for rural residents.

The way to national development is to develop rural areas for rural residents. This means helping small and medium businesses through a package of physical infrastructure as well as technical support.

Rural development also means putting more resources for the children in these areas, for their schools and social services. I had long discussions with my NGO friends who were returning to the *probinsya*, mainly about the future of their children. We knew all too well the biggest risk they were taking was that their children might end up in schools with lower standards.

And yet in the end we agreed that there are good schools now even in smaller cities like Iloilo (whose residents like to compare their city to Athens, with all the schools) and Cagayan de Oro.

My NGO friends also argue that the young might stand a better chance outside Metro Manila, in terms of growing up less materialistic. I wasn't quite sure there, considering how consumerism has invaded even remote rural areas but maybe, yes, smaller towns and cities offer a healthier environment for the young.

Meanwhile, I read with interest a recent Newsweek article about Japanese baby boomers—those born in the decade after World War II—now taking agricultural courses as they prepare for retirement. I have other baby boomer friends in the United States and Europe with similar plans of retiring in a rural or rurban (rural-urban) place, where they can continue to keep busy by renewing their ties with the land.

Notice how we have a Philippine Retirement Authority that concentrates on attracting foreign retirees, and yet have no incentive packages for Filipino retirees to settle in the *probinsya*. Retirement's a long way off yet for me, but yes, I can imagine joining a small army of white-haired retirees when the time comes, helping to develop the *probinsya*. Like plants, it's older humans who are sturdier and who stand a better chance of being moved around and growing new roots.

Soft approach to corruption

THIS IS A REACTION TO THE NEWS item titled "Senga affirms general's conviction." (PDI, 4/28/06) The sentence that was handed down to retired Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia is an absolute farce. After being found guilty in a multimillion-peso graft case, he's being punished with a piddling two years' confinement, hard labor, dishonorable discharge from the service and forfeited retirement benefits.

Firstly, with the vast fortune he amassed, I don't think he needs the retirement benefits at all. He has more than enough to last him, and probably the generation after him, a comfortable, if not luxurious, life. Secondly, I don't think that being discharged dishonorably will embarrass him either, because someone so brazen and insolent as that wouldn't know honor and integrity in the first place.

The hard labor part does sound mean until you learn that it actually means, "doing menial jobs." Is that not what every working, middle-class Filipino does on a daily basis, anyway?

This soft approach toward corrupt officials will only embolden others to continue with their shenanigans in government or military. Or are they just "following the leader"?

—MARK LAZARTE,
mlasa@Allstate.com

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

Education pains

IT IS BAD ENOUGH THAT CAP education planholders (two of my children are) have not been reimbursed for two semesters now. But should a parent like me have to suffer the same uncertainty under the GSIS Edu-Child program for my daughter Anne Bernadette Cledera, an incoming third year nursing student at the Perpetual Help College of Manila?

It is now past April. Despite my two letters to the GSIS head office—from which GSIS-Lucena said the advice of processing and payment must emanate—and several personal followups (no phone calls allowed), nothing has been heard from that office until now.

Is it because of sheer indifference or gross incompetence or both that the GSIS just doesn't seem to care? To think that before the GSIS' much ballyhooed computerization, we were promptly paid within three weeks from the submission of requirements.

—JESUS M. CLEDERA,
LBP Padillo Building,
Quezon Avenue, Lucena City

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Clarifying Banal's repeated assaults

THIS IS TO RESPOND TO THE COLUMN of Conrado Banal III titled "Million tanks to you." (PDI, 4/25/06)

Please allow us to correct the inaccuracies that unfairly portrayed Social Security System officials as irresponsible and corrupt. The issues were all speculations, based on "insider information" or unidentified sources that most likely are not privy to SSS operations. Banal raised them without checking his sources, unmindful of whether he would besmirch people's reputations.

We question the motives of Banal, who has written a lot of anti-SSS columns. He has never sought our side on any of his allegations against the SSS. His personal tirades are no better than a hatchet job aimed at advancing the interests of a few at the expense of more than 25 million SSS members.

Banal said "the SSS is not the one using (the SSS office in Makati). Occupying the multimillion rented office is an international organization based in Switzerland. My info is that it is an association of pension funds. It so happens that De la Paz is also the president of the international organization."

Banal could not even get his facts straight. The SSS owns the building and does not rent it. The 12-story building houses the offices of the members of the Social Security Commission, its legal staff, secretariat and secretary. It also provides several hearing rooms at the 11th and 12th floors. The rest of the floors are being leased by the Philippine Deposit and Insurance Corp.

The office of the regional director of the International Social Security Association (ISSA) occupies a small nook at the 11th floor of the building. The occupancy is covered by an agreement among the SSS and the rest of the Philippine Social Security Association, including the Government Service Insurance System and ISSA. It was signed during the time of former SSS Administrator Renato Valencia.

Also, Banal has been unfairly critical about the overseas trips of Corazon de la Paz in connection with her being ISSA president. We have said this before, and we will say this again: the SSS did not spend for those trips even though they were approved by the Social Security Commission and the Department of Finance. As ISSA president, De la Paz is expected to participate in international meetings and various fora on social security issues such as pension reforms, health and safety at work, investment of pension funds, migration and women and children.

Banal has repeatedly attacked the SSS regarding its stand on its shares in Equitable PCIBank. He assails our move to study our options and await the decision of the Supreme Court on the shares. We simply choose to be prudent and cautious than to be reckless. We have a fiduciary role to fulfill. We cannot renege on our mandate to protect the interests of our members in the bank.

—JOEL P. PALACIOS,
assistant vice president,
Media Affairs Department,
Social Security System,
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

Preserve Batanes' natural beauty and culture

THIS IS A REACTION TO THE ARTICLE "Batanes on the rise." (PDI, 4/2/06) I am an American of Ivatan blood. I am now living in San Diego, CA, USA. My father, who was born and raised in Ivana, left Batanes in the mid-1970s and joined the US Navy. I have visited Batanes three times since I was born in 1980 and I have seen marked changes on the islands in my last two visits (1995 and 2005).

I just want to thank the INQUIRER for writing such a beautiful article on Batanes. It has been our hope that the native Ivatans remaining on the islands continue to preserve their natural beauty, which tourists and natives alike have long loved.

During my last trip to Batanes, there were rumors that wealthy foreigners were planning to purchase large tracts of lands and even entire island(s) for "development" into vacation resorts. It saddens me to even think of seeing the natural beauty and culture of Batanes irreversibly given up and wasted for "commercial development," similar to what has happened in Boracay.

I hope that the INQUIRER article will influence others to become actively involved in the preservation of Batanes' natural resources.

—NEREMIAH CASTANO

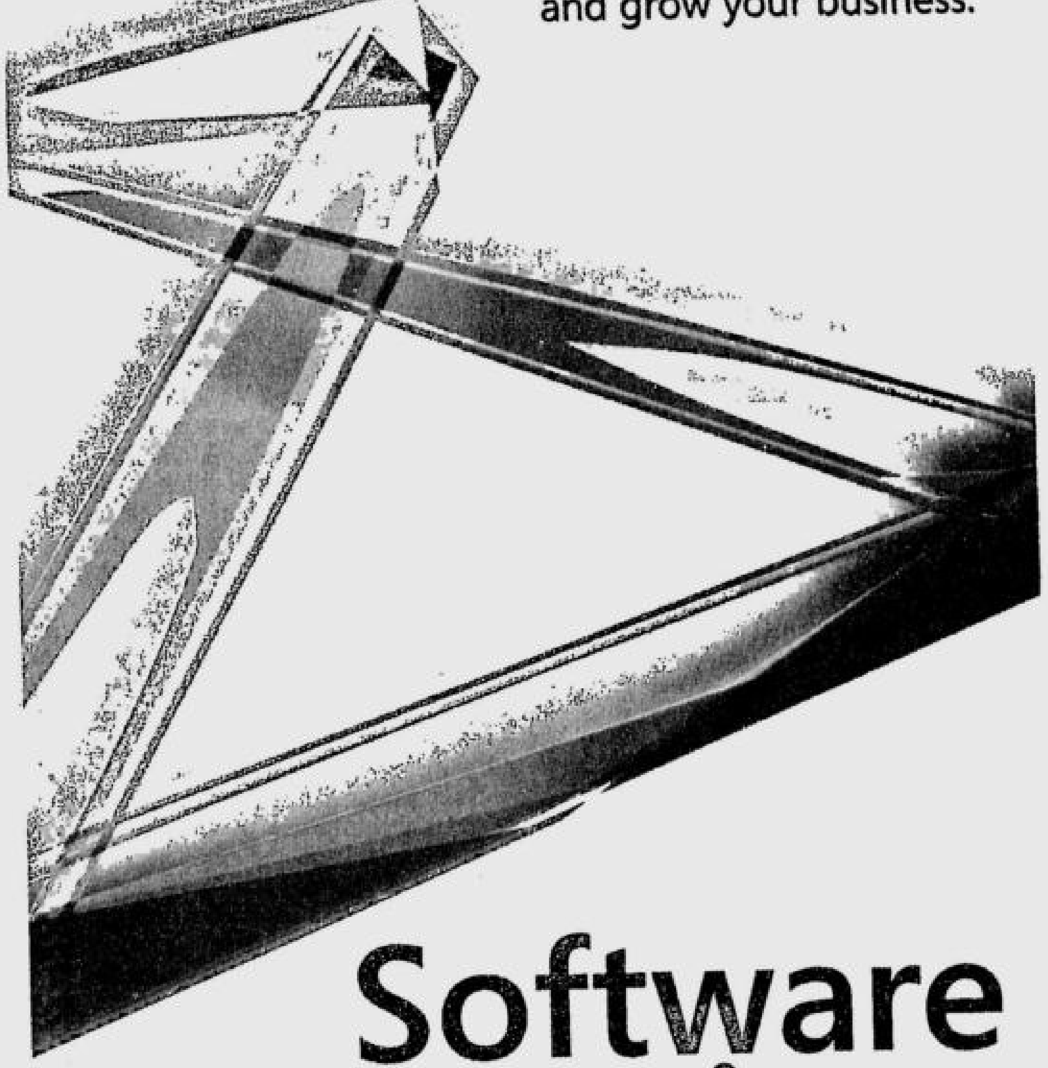
Simple matters with big implications

I AGREE WITH CONRADO DE QUIROS 100 percent in his column "Thank God for Theresa Pangilinan!" (PDI, 4/25/06) Our country needs citizens like Pangilinan. Our culture often teaches us to be "nice" at the expense of being "true."

For the Philippines to move forward, no one must be above the law. When I arrived here in New Zealand, I read in the papers that the prime minister's convoy was issued a speeding ticket. A couple of month's later, the governor general was cited for the same offense.

Would a traffic officer in our country dare do the same? How would the apprehended VIPs take it? A very simple matter really but with big implications.

—XAVIER YAP, rex_junrex@yahoo.co.nz



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'Reinvented' PNP goal: Decimate NPA

CAMP OLIVAS, PAMPANGA—THE POLICE WOULD "reinvent" their counter-insurgency program in Central Luzon, setting as target the "decimation" of the New People's Army and the National Democratic Front, a top police official in the region said.

"Our new program will give the PNP (Philippine National Police) a more active role," Chief Supt. Ismael Rafanan said as he assumed leadership of the regional police command on Tuesday.

Rafanan replaced Chief Supt. Alejandro Lapinid, who was named head of the PNP directorate for human resources and doctrine development.

Rafanan, the former chief of the PNP's intelligence group, said while the "paradigm shift" would continue to see the PNP lending active intelligence support to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the new program would require policemen to take on more combat missions.

Top officials of the AFP's Northern Luzon Command attended the turnover rites.

"We will be strengthening our provincial mobile groups so that we can contain the incursions that the NPA is doing. We have been experiencing a lot of setbacks. [Rebels] have been very bold in attacking our isolated stations simply because we lack the manpower," he said.

The AFP, he said, will continue to be at the forefront of the anti-insurgency campaign. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk, and Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

VICTIM of development, an Ati child fetches water in a community that they stand to lose should resort developers have their way on Boracay Island.
JESS YUSON/PDI PHOTO

Gov't asks SC to reverse court rulings on Boracay land titling

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—THE GOVERNMENT HAS ASKED the Supreme Court to reverse lower court rulings recognizing the right of settlers and land claimants on Boracay Island to have their lots titled.

In a 14-page memorandum filed on March 2, the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) asked the high court to reverse the decision of the Court of Appeals (CA) dated Dec. 9, 2004 as well as the CA resolution dated March 31, 2005.

The Dec. 9, 2004 ruling, issued by the appellate court's 20th Division in Cebu City, upheld a decision issued by the Kalibo Regional Trial Court Branch 5 on July 14, 1999, that a 1978 presidential proclamation classifying the island as a tourist and marine zone does not bar the claimants from having their lands titled.

The government appealed the decision, which was denied by the CA in its March 31, 2005 resolution.

In its petition before the SC, the OSG reiterated its earlier claim that Boracay Island cannot be subjected to land titling because it is still unclassified. It said that since Boracay was declared as public land, the island could not be sold or leased until it is declared alienable and disposable.

Private ownership of lots on the island is technically illegal under Proclamation 1801 issued by the late President Ferdinand Marcos on Nov. 10, 1978.

The proclamation declared Boracay and other islands and coves as tourist and marine zones and categorized the island as public lands under the administration and control of the Philippine Tourism Authority (PTA).

But claimants said they have acquired vested rights of lands they occupy because they have been paying tax declarations, many for nearly 30 years.

Land claimants, led by then Malay town mayor and now provincial board member Jose Yap, filed the petition before the Kalibo RTC on Nov. 19, 1997 seeking the court's interpretation of the proclamation.

Under a draft administrative order, the government is planning to declare more than half of the 1,032-hectare island as "alienable and disposable."

Parts of the island will be declared as forest lands and will be used for plantation and fishponds. The other areas will be categorized as protected areas and parks.

But claimants are opposing the classification of Boracay as public land and the plan to declare it as alienable and disposable. They held protest actions last year against then Environment Secretary Michael Defensor.

"We in Boracay will have to bid for our land and pay for our lands all over again at market rates, if we win the bid. The building that is standing on the land will also be the subject of public bidding," Orlando Sacay, chair of the Boracay Foundation Inc. (BFI) said in an e-mailed statement to the INQUIRER.

BFI is composed of owners of resorts, hotels, restaurants and other businesses on the island.

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Cha-cha now on agenda of gov't talks with rebels

BAGUIO CITY—THE ARROYO ADMINISTRAtion is now discussing the impact of Charter change in its ongoing talks with rebels and extremists in the provinces, the presidential adviser on the peace process said here last week.

Jesus Dureza, a former Mindanao lawmaker and government peace negotiator, said all rebel stakeholders would be apprised about the potential changes in the bureaucracy, including a shift to a federal government run by parliament.

But Dureza said the change to a federal government would not be reason to reopen negotiations with rebel groups, which have existing ceasefire agreements with the president, and not a prime minister.

"The peace process moves above the fray," he said, but the implications of a parliament governing federated states are already being discussed with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

"*Walang mabibigla* (No one will be caught off guard)," he said, in case rebel groups sign peace agreements regardless of how the Charter change movement fares.

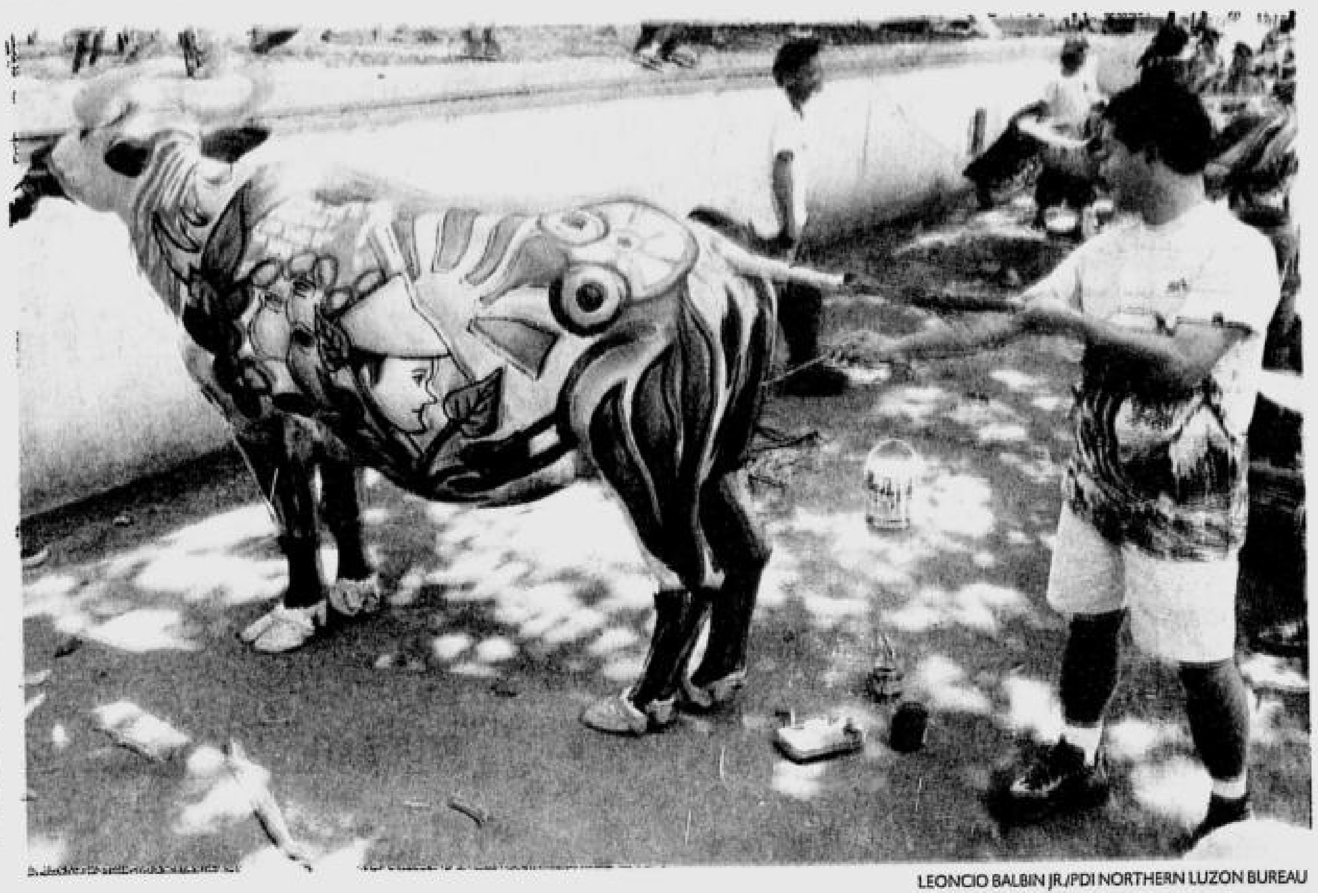
Dureza was here to facilitate talks with the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA) formed by the late rebel priest Conrado Balweg.

The CPLA is the first rebel group to obtain a peace agreement with Malacañang after the ouster of strongman Ferdinand Marcos.

The CPLA pact in 1987, and the lobby exerted by the militant Cordillera Peoples Alliance helped usher in a provision in the 1987 Constitution that mandated the creation of autonomous regions in the Cordillera and Mindanao.

Malacañang, however, has not yet decided on how these regions can retain their autonomy under a federated Philippines, according to Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, the former government peace process adviser.

Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau



LEONCIO BALBIN JR./PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

A CARABAO stays still as he is painted on with various designs during a carabao painting contest in Vigan City. The contest was part of the city's celebration of the 13th Viva Vigan Festival of the Arts.

Vigan folk try painting real carabaos

By Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

VIGAN CITY—WANT TO BE LIKE KIDLAT Tahimik, Malang, BenCab and other famous and emerging Filipino artists who were commissioned last year by the INQUIRER to paint the INQUIRER's mascot Guyito?

You should have been here on Labor Day to paint on a real carabao.

"I washed her early this morning and even brushed his horn with a toothbrush," said Ricky Aniog of his 8-year-old carabao.

Marco Tugawan, 15, and five other teenagers from the Divine Word College of Vigan were busy applying a prime of white paint (water soluble, of course) on the carabao.

The carabao won first prize in last year's inaugural contest.

"I don't know what they did. They just applied many colors on him and placed three jars on his head," said Aniog.

Tugawan said they planned to paint a farm scene.

The carabao's 3-year-old female offspring was also among 20 other "canvases." Local artists were painting a surreal scene of tropical fish and daisies on her.

Buffalo, the 18-year-old carabao of Ernesto Aster, was fidgety as artists painted Vigan jars and a *karetela* wheel on the side.

Aster said that last year, artists painted the main door of the St. Paul's Cathedral on the carabao.

Other uses

"It was so beautiful I was hesitant to use him on the field because he would be muddied," said Aster.

Mayor Ferdinand Medina recalled that one entry last year painted demons on a carabao and the artists dressed themselves up as devils.

"But after walking a few steps, the carabao went berserk. *Baka naluganan*," he said, referring to the Ilocano's belief of spirits entering a body.

Farmers feed the carabaos corn and hold them to distract their attention from the painters and to stop them from licking the paint.

Carabaos, unlike horses, do not have sweat glands, that is why painting them is possible, Medina said. But he said they had to be brought to the plaza at dawn and their place had to be watered to induce them to stay.

Sled decor

Also crucial to the contest is the decoration of the sled or the "*pasagad*." Jars, Vigan *inabel* cloth, *longganiza* (sausage), gourds and plows are readied by the artists.

"We wanted to honor the carabao. After all, Vigan is still an agricultural city," Medina said.

Last year, 20 life-size fiberglass Guyitos rendered by selected artists were unveiled during the INQUIRER's 20th year anniversary. These were raffled to the top 20 high schools in the country to encourage reading and creativity.

Among the shade of huge mango trees at Plaza Salcedo, the 20 painted carabaos were either stoic or irritated.

One group was already painting the seal of Vigan City and scenes from the rural life as well as a carabao and the panorama of the heritage village on the side of another carabao.

Another group painted a set of guitars on both sides of the carabao's rump and planned to include a farm scene and a corn of the front legs.

The sleds were also lavishly designed. One had a tree full of golden mangoes and other fruits. One made a *pasagad* of two Vigan houses, *kalesas* and jars in miniature.

Other than the carabao painting, the other contest this Labor Day was *bokel* or the seed mosaic.

Last year, artists meticulously used corn, rice and vegetable seeds to create rustic scenes, *kalesas* and even one of Vigan's famous old houses.

The problem was that seed borers and other pests entered the picture (the winners were glass framed).

"Despite four fumigations, the pests survived. I guess the seeds were meant to be devoured although we were thinking of formalin to preserve the seeds," Medina said.

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Deal with Imelda seen to cost gov't ₱500M

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—THE GOVernment will lose control of more than P500 million worth of sequestered property in Leyte once the plan of the Presidential Commission on Good Government to enter into a compromise agreement with former first lady Imelda Marcos pushes through.

PCGG regional director Renoir Dauag, however, said any compromise agreement that might be entered into by the Marcos widow and the national government would take some time to complete.

"Any (compromise) agreement between her and the government faces legal impediments. There are still several cases filed against her before the Sandiganbayan. I don't know how this will be resolved," Dauag told the INQUIRER.

Dauag said that if there was an order from the PCGG's main office to return the pieces of property that are being claimed by Mrs. Marcos, then "we will follow it ..."

"But so far, there is none. These are just talks," he said.

Compromise agreement

The PCGG, through Commissioner Ricardo Abcede, had expressed its intention to strike a compromise agreement with the former first lady in exchange for the dropping of all criminal cases filed against her.

Marcos owns several pieces of property in Leyte that have been placed under the administration and control of the PCGG.

These include the 24-hectare estate in Olot, Tolosa, the imposing buildings of the Santo Niño Shrine and Museum that contain several artifacts and religious icons, and the People's Center and Library.

The museum and the library are located on Real Street.

Dauag estimated the total worth of the property at over P500 million. Incidentally, these provide P5 million in income to the PCGG annually.

The PCGG earns from rents paid by private individuals in the Olot Estate and the People's Center, and the tour fees collected from visitors of the Santo Niño Shrine and Museum.

The money is used to pay the salaries of the PCGG's 26 personnel and its maintenance and other operating expenses for the pieces of property that are under its administration and control.

MARCOS

Pinatubo trail opens amid probe

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CAPAS, TARLAC—THE local government and a Korean company on Saturday opened the new trail they developed toward Mt. Pinatubo, although the Department of Tourism has yet to release the findings of its investigation of alleged violations of the new access route.

The inaugural drive at the 7-km dirt road (not 20-km as DOT Regional Director Ronaldo Tiotuico earlier reported) gathered more than 100 guests, including "Pinoy Big Brother" winner Nene Tamayo.

The route was carved amid rolling hills starting at Sitio Patal Pinto and ending at Sitio Magkupya.

Past the approach, workers were seen building concrete drainage pipes in at least two segments where water flowed. Earth-moving activities that began in January left mounds of volcanic ash and Maladuron trees by the roadside.

Dusty

No accidents occurred in Saturday's trial run by almost 70 drivers of four-wheel drive vehicles, Mayor Reynaldo Catacutan said.

"The only complaint was that the road was dusty," he told reporters.

He said this was "not an entirely new road," because it was revived from a road developed by logging companies in the 1950s and by the United States Air Force in the 1970s.

The Capas government and the PDC Development Corp., he said, need not get an environmental clearance certificate from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for the project as the road was only rehabilitated.

Safety

The other issues that the national DOT office needed to confirm pertained to the road's safety and the lack of free and prior informed consent from tribal groups in the area.

Tourism Undersecretary Oscar Palabyab on Sunday told the INQUIRER that the results of the investigation would be known this week.

At Magkupya, the PDCDC flattened an area for parking space and toilets. Nearby, it also maintained a stable for 30 horses for rent to tourists.

From there, a downhill path intersects with the regular route to the volcano, reducing the trek time by less than an hour.

The regular route traverses the O' Donnell River, which has been filled with lahar or volcanic mud, turning it into a sort of a gray highway that leads to what tourists call as lahar canyons.

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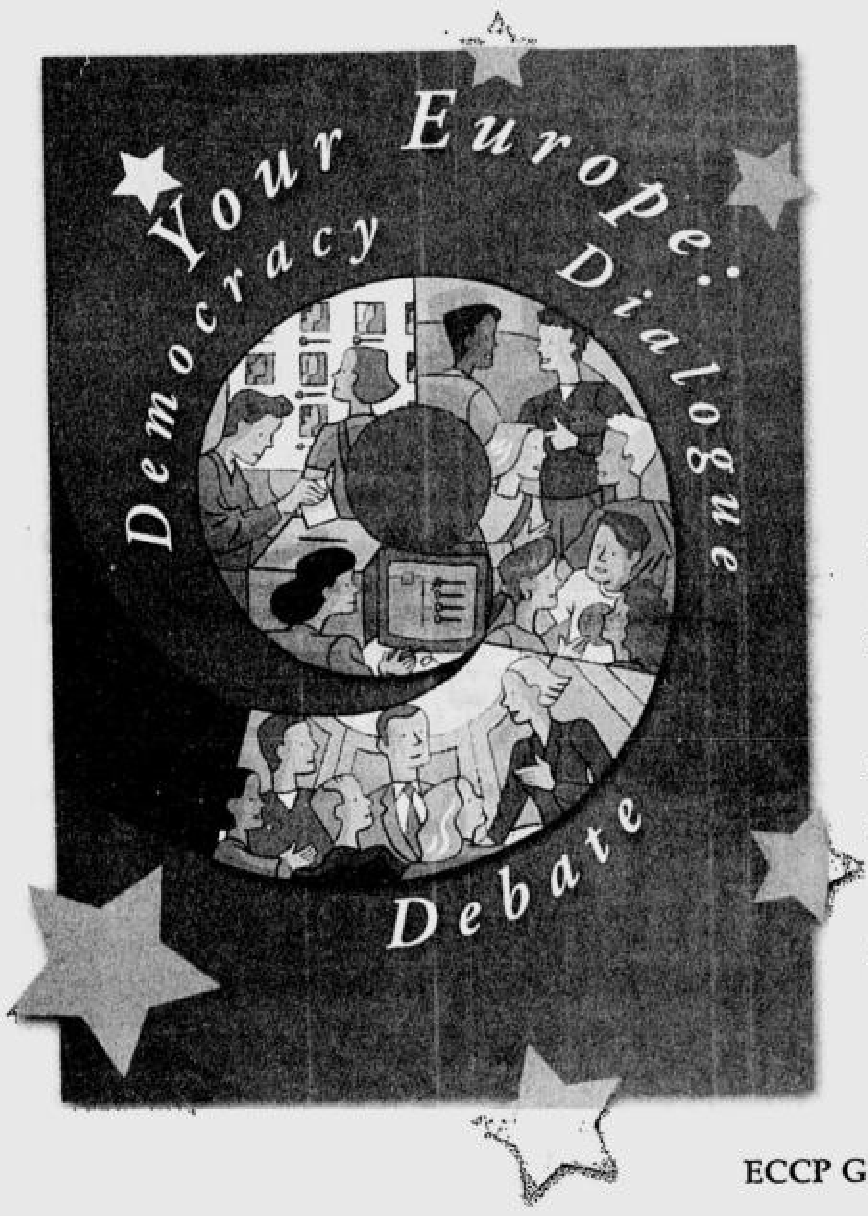

22 April to 31 May
Poster Exhibit from Don Quijote Movies at Instituto Cervantes Gallery, 855 T. M. Kalaw St., Ermita, Manila (www.manila.cervantes.es)

Get the opportunity to marvel at the 45 posters of films based on Don Quijote de la Mancha, produced in different countries at the new Instituto Cervantes Gallery in Manila.

16 May
Book Launch: Endangered, Fil-Hispanic Architecture. Papers from the First International Congress on Fil-Hispanic Architecture held in November 2002.
Instituto Cervantes Gallery, 855 T. M. Kalaw St., Ermita, Manila

Film screenings on FOOTBALL are scheduled on the following dates every 5 p.m. in Instituto Cervantes:

6 May: Soccer Days
13 May: The Goalkeeper
20 May: The Longest Penalty in the World
27 May: Real, The Movie

Football in Spain is much more than a sport. It is also a symbol of regional rivalries. Sometimes, it is even related to politics and social issues. This film series presents four movies that explore this sport from different perspectives.

Instituto Cervantes

4 May • Crossroad 77 Convenarium, Quezon City
6 May • SM City Cebu
The Antonio Forcione Quartet, a presentation by the British Council

Hailed as the Jimi Hendrix of the acoustic guitar, award-winning Antonio Forcione is considered one of the most charismatic and inventive performers to come out of Europe in recent years. His remarkable originality stems from his creative quest to use every imaginable part of the acoustic guitar, without for a second, losing sight of a refined musical sense. The Antonio Forcione Quartet plays vibrant and evocative music tinged with echoes of African, flamenco, Brazilian, classical and blues with a hint of Indian raga.

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6 May
European Union Cup Racing Festival (Horse Racing)

Back by popular demand, the second European Union Cup Racing Festival at Santa Ana Park, Manila, with the feature race - The European Union Cup - and a full card of supporting races named after the European Union Member States.

SANTA ANA PARK

9 May
Europe Day Reception
(By invitation only) Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Makati City

A reception to mark the friendship between the European Union and the Philippines.

11 to 31 May
World Press Photo Exhibition presented by the Royal Netherlands Embassy and the Ayala Museum

The exhibition shows the winning images of the 49th World Press Photo contest and besides being shown in Manila, will travel to 85 other cities around the world.

Each year, an independent international jury, consisting of thirteen members, judges the entries submitted by photojournalists, agencies, newspapers and magazines from all corners of the world. This year's competition attracted 4,448 photographers from 122 countries. This year's exhibition contains approximately 200 winning photographs in 10 different categories: Spot News, General News, People in the News, Sports Action, Sports Features, Contemporary Issues, Daily Life, Portraits, Arts and Entertainment and Nature.

WORLD PRESS PHOTO Ayala MUSEUM

22 May
ECCP Golf Tournament, Sta. Elena Golf and Country Club in Laguna

26 to 27 May
ECCP Oro Chamber Golf Challenge, Pueblo de Oro and Country Club in Cagayan de Oro

26 to 27 May
Nemanja Radulovic performing with Dominique Plancade Classical violin & piano concert, Philam Life Theatre, U.N. Avenue, Manila

Born in former Yugoslavia, Nemanja Radulovic studied music in Germany, and perfected the violin in France. Selected "Rising Star for 2006-2007" by the directors of the prestigious concert halls of Europe and America, 20-year-old Nemanja performs for the third time in Manila during the French Spring for the music-loving Filipino audience, accompanied on the piano by equally talented, Dominique Plancade.

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26 May
Launch of *Europe Ko 'To* Drawing Contest

26 May to 3 June
A celebration of Mozart's Music

Join these twin events at The Podium with the drawing contest for elementary and high school students about perceptions of the European Union. At the same time, get the chance to view special videos on Mozart and to listen to his immortal music.

THE PODIUM

27 May
Mozart Night, Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Makati City

Four-course dinner for this special evening has been specially prepared by the Captain's Bar in Mandarin Hotel. Details may be obtained from the hotel.

29 May
An Evening with Mozart, Sanctuario de San Antonio Parish

A presentation by the Sanctuario de San Antonio Parish Council and Johann Strauss Society in cooperation with the Embassy of Austria to celebrate the 250th Year of Mozart, a major concert featuring Mozart concerto for flute and harpand Mozart's coronation mass.

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor **Jun Bandayrel**
Bureau Chief **Rolando B. Fernandez**

THE PAOAY Church in Ilocos Norte is shown in this photo taken in November 1995. TOOTS SOBERANO

Heritage festival opens in Paoay

By Cristina Arzadon
Paoay, Ilocos Norte

ALTHOUGH THE PAOAY CHURCH WAS INSCRIBED AS A WORLD heritage site in 1998, stakeholders are beginning to realize the need to participate in the conservation of the single, most important historical icon in Paoay, Ilocos Norte.

Residents agree that Paoay is more than just media hype or a business. The town has been placed under the watch of the global community as the home of a world-class pride.

That the country's cultural community has continued to take notice of Paoay was indicated when the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) chose the town as the launching pad of this year's Filipino Heritage Festival on April 30.

In 2003, President Macapagal-Arroyo issued Proclamation No. 439 declaring May as National Heritage Month. This year, the festival showcases the rich Filipino heritage in different provinces to spur public and private support for the preservation of ethnic and cultural roots.

Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Paoay Mayor Bonifacio Clemente headed the contingent that welcomed organizers led by the NCCA Heritage Festival committee.

"In this troubled times, it is important to remind all of us how we came to be as a people. By this self-examination, we can trace our roots and understand our direction for the future," Marcos said during the inaugural program.

Church rehab

Part of the festival preparation was restoring the Paoay Church's interior walls through a fund-raising activity that the parish priest, Victor Calma, had initiated. The rehabilitation, however, was not completed in time for the event.

Calma said more funds were needed to complete the work.

Through donations, the interior walls and chambers were coated with white paint and gold linings. Visible fissures on the walls were reportedly plastered according to specifications prescribed by the National Historical Institute (NHI).

It was not clear if the restoration was meant for the festival ceremonies. When funds fell short, it was suspended, leaving the exit ways unpainted.

Part of preserving the 16th-century European baroque cultural icon was closing down the roads around it to heavy vehicles. Only light vehicles were allowed to pass through near the church.

Ground movements

Structural engineers who inspected the church in early 2000 noted that ground movements caused by heavy vehicles might disturb the church's foundation.

The two-day launching rites that began on April 30 were uniquely remarkable, too. These were opened by world-acclaimed pianist Cecile Licad in an evening performance inside the spruced-up St. Augustine Church.

Sharing the stage with Licad were tenor Lemuel de la Cruz, soprano Alexis Edralin, flutist GJ Herman Gomez, and assisting pianist Mary Anne Espina.

A surprise performer was young Ilocano pianist Bianca Montañez of Piddig town, who won in the National Music Competitions for Young Artists. Licad is said to have discovered Montañez during her (Licad's) performance in Tuguegarao City in Cagayan in 2004.

Enchanted

Licad and her group enchanted the crowd led by Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban and other Supreme Court justices. They were in town on the invitation of Associate Justice Conchita Carpio-Morales, a Paoay resident and owner of one of the heritage houses.

Organizers and local tourism groups put together a two-day parade of cultural shows and exhibits showcasing the town's famous *inabel* designs and well-preserved keepsakes.

The group visited three heritage houses whose unique architectural designs had been preserved.

The festival committee reportedly prevailed upon the residents of a bubble-topped octagonal house, an American colonial house, to stop their plans to knock down the structure and replace it with another.

The homeowners had reportedly told the NHI that the colonial house, north of the Paoay Church, has shown structural decay and in danger of collapsing. Reports said the institute had promised the owners that it would provide funds to restore the house.

Visitors also sampled traditional Ilocano cuisine, such as "*imbaliktad*" (beef entrails cooked with the sauce from small intestines), "*unnok*" (freshwater clams), "*poki-poki*" (mashed broiled eggplant sautéd with ground pork, tomatoes and native onions) and the popular Ilocano *longganisa* (native sausage).

They visited other heritage houses in San Nicolas, Sarrat and Batac towns.

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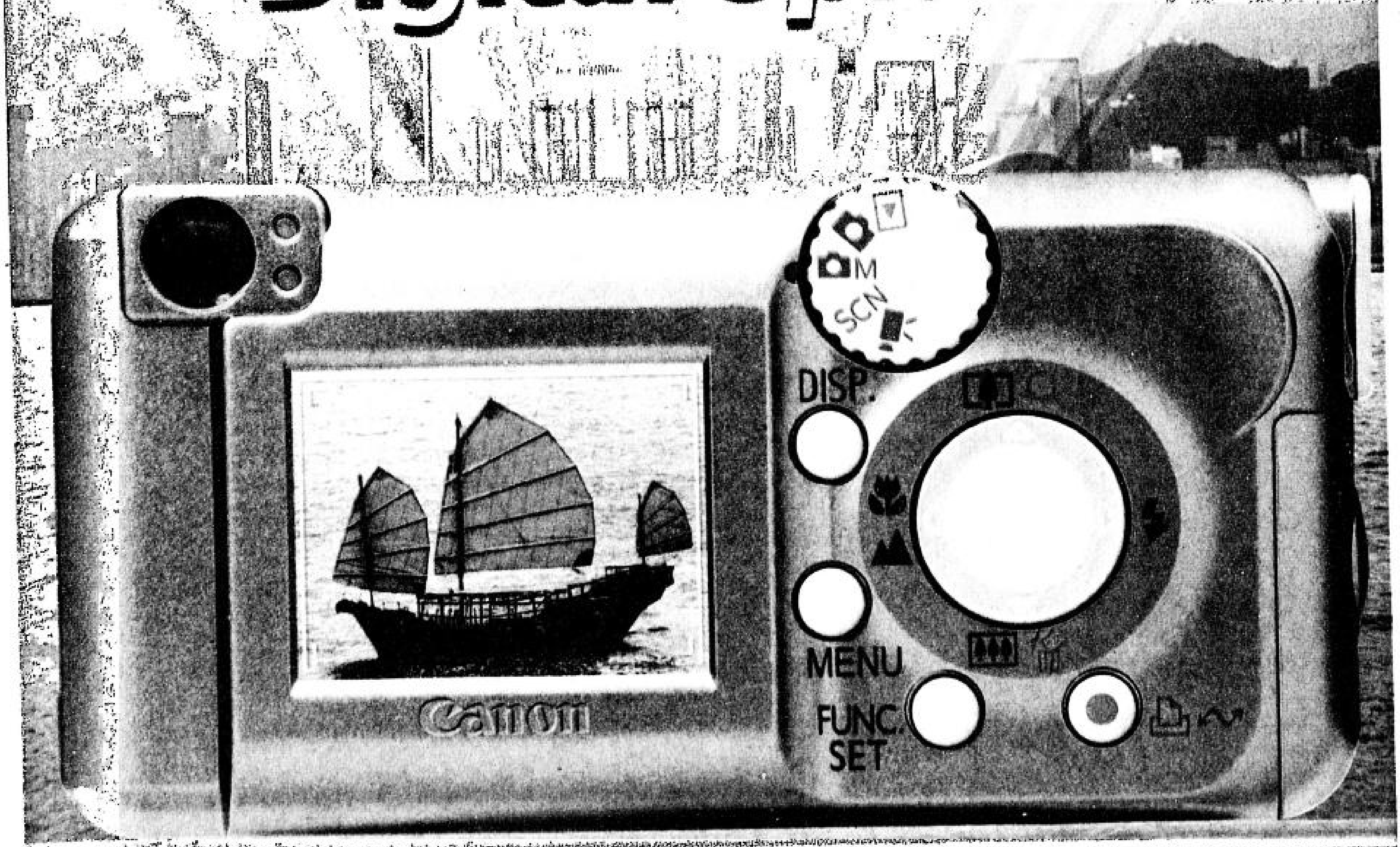

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Pangasinenses join hands to send scholars to school

By Gobleth Moulic
Dagupan City

THESE new design dresses are crafted from *inabel*.
PHOTOS BY RAY ZAMBRANO

IN A RARE display OF support, government officials from rival political parties in Pangasinan joined entrepreneurs, professionals and civic-minded people in raising funds to fulfill the dreams of poor students in the province.

In February, the government and the private sector set aside fears of a coup d'etat and committed themselves to send poor students to school. They pooled their resources to help the Pangasinan-Washington Sister State Association (Pawassa) produce a fashion show titled "'06 Fashion Revolution" to finance the college education of its 32 scholars in various universities in Pangasinan.

Local politicians, businessmen, doctors, students and people from the private sector not only sold the P1,000 tickets for the event but joined the show to the delight of the crowd.

Sixty-one amateur models wore the creations of six local designers who belong to the Pangasinan Fashion Council (PFC).

The designers—Rhoda Ceralde, Raffy Viernes, Vidalyn Ferrer, Luchi Vicente, Glademir Echavarre and Billy Tamagos—used the indigenous fabric *abel Iloco*, which was donated by the Ilocos Sur government. They did not charge for their services.

Fashionable

Pawassa president Celia Lambino said the *abel* fashion show was meant to promote and widen the use of *abel*, a viable and fashionable textile, and to raise funds for Pawassa scholars.

One scholar, Deo Canave, completed his computer science degree last year and is now working for a bank in Pasig City, Lambino said.

"We could not have done this alone without the trust, support and commitment of our patrons and friends," she told some 300 people who attended the fashion show.

Since 1995, Pawassa and its US counterpart, the Washington-Pangasinan Sister State Association (Wapssa), have been working closely with Filipinos abroad to provide educational materials and financial assistance to poor college students.

"We have been encouraging Filipinos in Seattle to sponsor at least one student a year. Fortunately, these kind-hearted souls have continued supporting the project," Wapssa president Alma Kern told the INQUIRER in an interview last year in Seattle.

Armi Lorica, Pawassa treasurer who helped organize the event, said provincial officials led by Gov. Victor Agbayani had pledged money to Pawassa.

Moved to tears

Lorica said some people, who could not give financial donations, shared talent, energy and resources to help produce the show. Others used their network to get sponsors, she said.

Alvin Mendoza, a Math major at the Pangasinan State University and Pawassa scholar, moved the audience to tears when he spoke during the show.

"Poverty is not a hindrance to success. Most of us [are aware of that saying] but I believe in it," said Mendoza, whose mother is very ill. Before he passed the Pawassa-Wapssa scholarship program, his aunts, uncles and teachers shelled out money to support his education.

"Scholars are much motivated to achieve our goals because we want the best for our family. We don't want our children to experience cooking noodles for viand almost everyday and even photocopying books," he said.

"We are striving hard to avoid these things from happening again for [the sake] of our future family. Without your support, our dream will remain a dream."

Last year, Wapssa sponsors from Seattle flew to Pangasinan to meet their scholars for the first time. They urged them to seriously pursue their goals so they could become productive members of the community.

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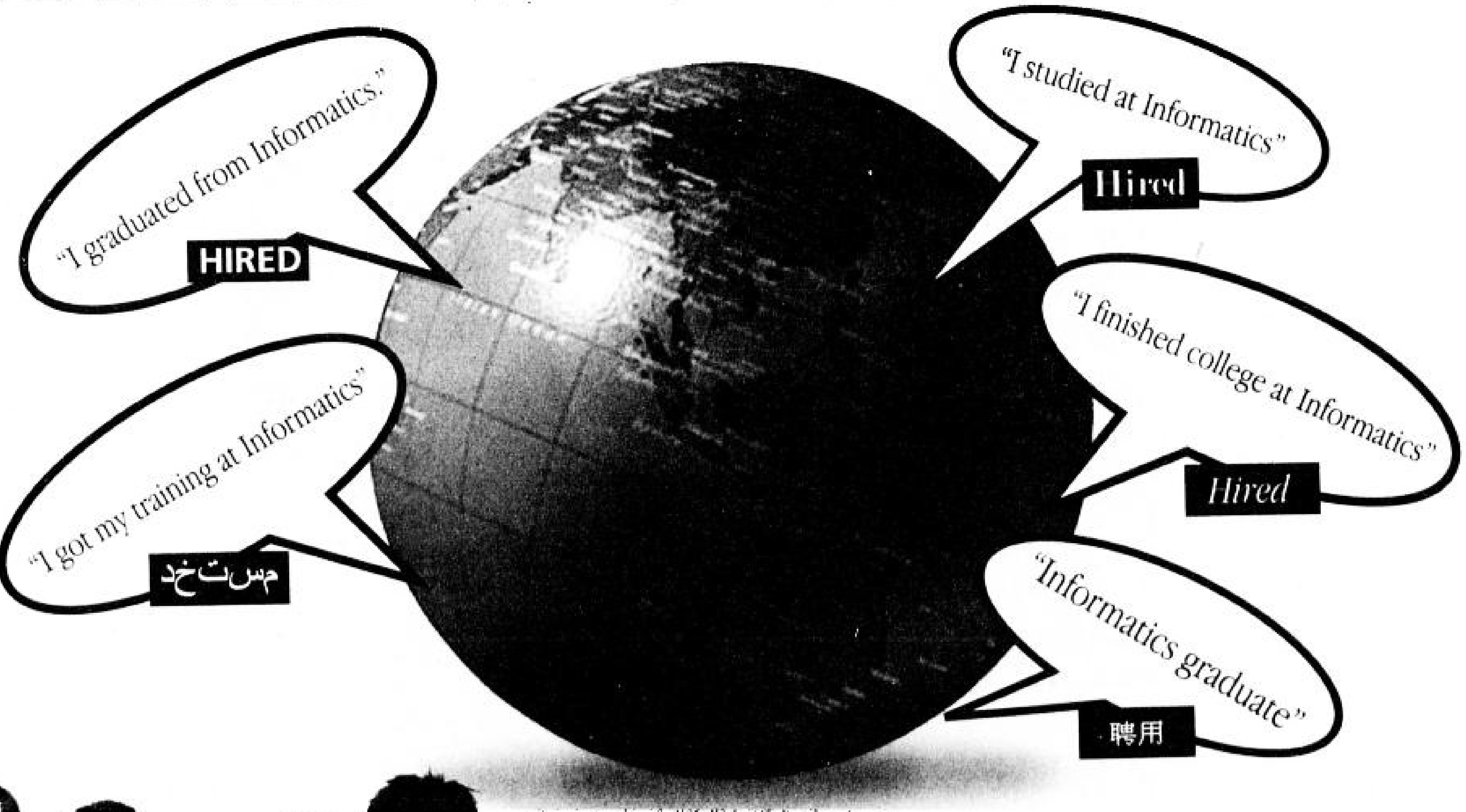
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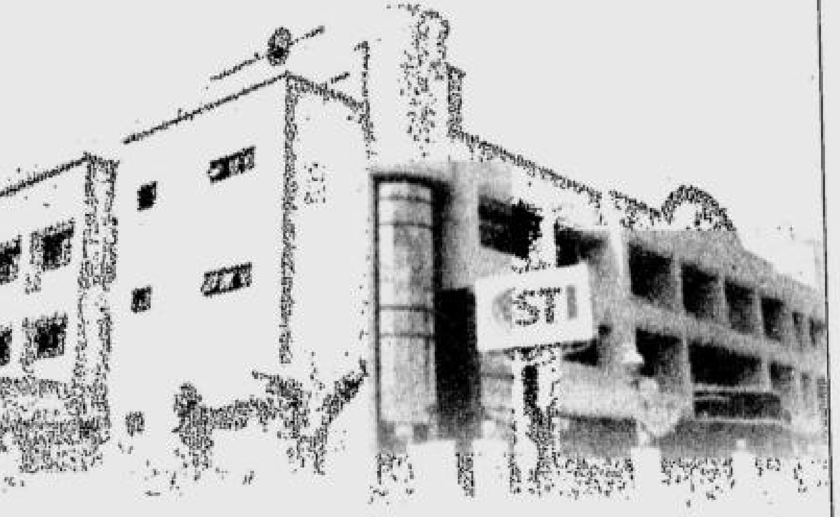

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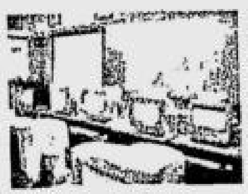

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ERNESTO Macahiya, in handcuffs, is brought to a Makati City court to face rebellion charges filed against him by the government. REM ZAMORA

Gringo aide detained at Makati City jail

By Tarra V. Quismundo

RETIRED BANK EXECUTIVE Ernesto Macahiya, who is facing rebellion charges along with former Sen. Gregorio Honosan, will spend his days in the company of robbers, drug pushers and other crime suspects while on trial.

Four days after his arrest, the spokesperson of the Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Inc. (PGBI) was transferred yesterday to the jam-packed Makati City Jail on Lawton Avenue in Barangay Northside, joining some 720 inmates.

Jail guards brought him to Cell No. 8, one of 11 MCJ cells for male inmates which hold between 45 and 90 detainees each.

Judge Oscar Pimentel ordered Macahiya brought to MCJ after the Philippine National Police turned him over to the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 148 at around 11 a.m. yesterday.

Pimentel set his arraignment on May 9.

"I was told by the judge that even in the absence of my co-accused, my case can proceed," Macahiya told reporters as he was escorted out of the courtroom after a 15-minute meeting with the judge.

Conscience is clean

Macahiya was the first to be arrested of six co-accused, including Honasan. The others were leaders and members of the PGBI, a fraternity of active and retired military and police officers which Honasan founded.

"My conscience is clean," said Macahiya, who was handcuffed and was escorted by four police officers. "I think given a fair, just treatment of the legal processes, I feel I can overcome all these trumped-up charges."

Macahiya said that, for one thing, the charge sheet was "riddled with inaccuracies and untruths."

"The charge sheet referred to me as a retired colonel, but whether it's AFP or PNP was not mentioned there. But the truth of the matter is I have never been identified with any organization, whether AFP or the police. I'm a retired executive of the DBP (Development Bank of the Philippines). It goes to show how crude was the intelligence report that went into the preparation of the charge sheet," he said.

Operatives of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Counter-Intelligence Group arrested Macahiya near a cockpit in Barangay San Antonio, Los Baños, Laguna, adjacent to his hometown of Bay. He was first detained at Camp Vicente Lim in Calamba City.

He had a P500,000 bounty, part of an P8-million reward that the government put up for the capture of his group.

No complaints

Asked about his detention, Macahiya said: "So far so good, it's just that I can't sleep well. They (custodians) are very civil and professional and, so far, I have no complaints."

Macahiya had been in hiding since Makati RTC Branch 145 Judge Cesar Santamaria issued arrest warrants for him and his fellow accused on Feb. 25.

The Department of Justice had earlier charged the group for their alleged role in planning the takeover of the Oakwood Premier apartment-hotel in Makati City on July 27, 2003.

The case was initially raffled off to Santamaria but was later transferred to Branch 148. This court has been hearing the coup d'etat case against 31 junior military officers tagged as leaders of the Oakwood mutiny.

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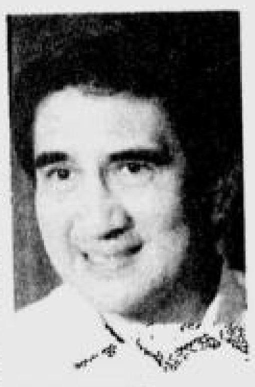
Gringo sent surrender feelers, says Pimentel

From page A1



HONASAN

bellion is a bailable offense, Pimentel said Honosan was "not sure if the government will give him a fair deal."

The government had put up a P5-million bounty for the arrest of Honasan, 58. The former leader of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement who led coup attempts against former President Corazon Aquino had been tagged as the brains behind several coup plots against Ms Arroyo. *(See related story on this page)*

"The removal of the bounty will ease the situation somehow and it would be a good start," Pimentel said, adding that Honosan did not indicate where he was and he did not ask.

Pimentel declined to reveal Honasan's text messages but he said "not one (of them) speaks of revolution." To one message, Pimentel said he replied: "Count on me for whatever is legally possible."

The opposition senator said he could help by ensuring that Honasan's right as an accused entitled to the presumption of innocence until proven guilty was respected.

He said he had accompanied Honasan before a Department of Justice panel of investigators when he was similarly charged a few years ago.

Pimentel said his efforts should not be considered a negotiation for a compromise with the government. He said he was not aware of any negotiations being conducted.

It was earlier reported that Honasan's emissaries had been holding talks with government officials purportedly for his surrender, but Malacañang has denied this.

AFP restricts media movements inside Camp Aguinaldo

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

ON ORDERS OF ARMED FORCES Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga, media movements have been restricted inside the AFP general headquarters.

All areas inside Camp Aguinaldo "other than the immediate vicinity" of the AFP Public Information Office (PIO), the adjoining Defense Press Corps (DPC) office and the grandstand area are now "off limits" to members of the media "unless authorized" by Col. Tristan Kison, chief of the PIO.

Kison himself announced Senga's order in a memo dated April 20.

Reporters who have covered the defense beat for years could not recall a time when such a memo was issued.

Copies of the memo were given to reporters only on April 28, after a GMA 7 reporter and his crew were barred from entering Camp Aguinaldo on the basis of Kison's memo.

Per the memo, only media representatives with accredited PIO identification cards may enter the camp "on days when there are no scheduled press conferences or media advisories."

Members of the media may only enter offices in the camp if they are accompanied by a PIO staffer or if they have written authorization or a media advisory from the PIO.

The Military Police Battalion "shall ensure immediate clearing of areas not authorized for coverage and promptly escort concerned media personnel to DPC office or PIO-AFP in case of failure to present the above requirements," Kison said.

He said the memo was issued "in view of security measures as mandated by AFP R[egulation] G-200-013."

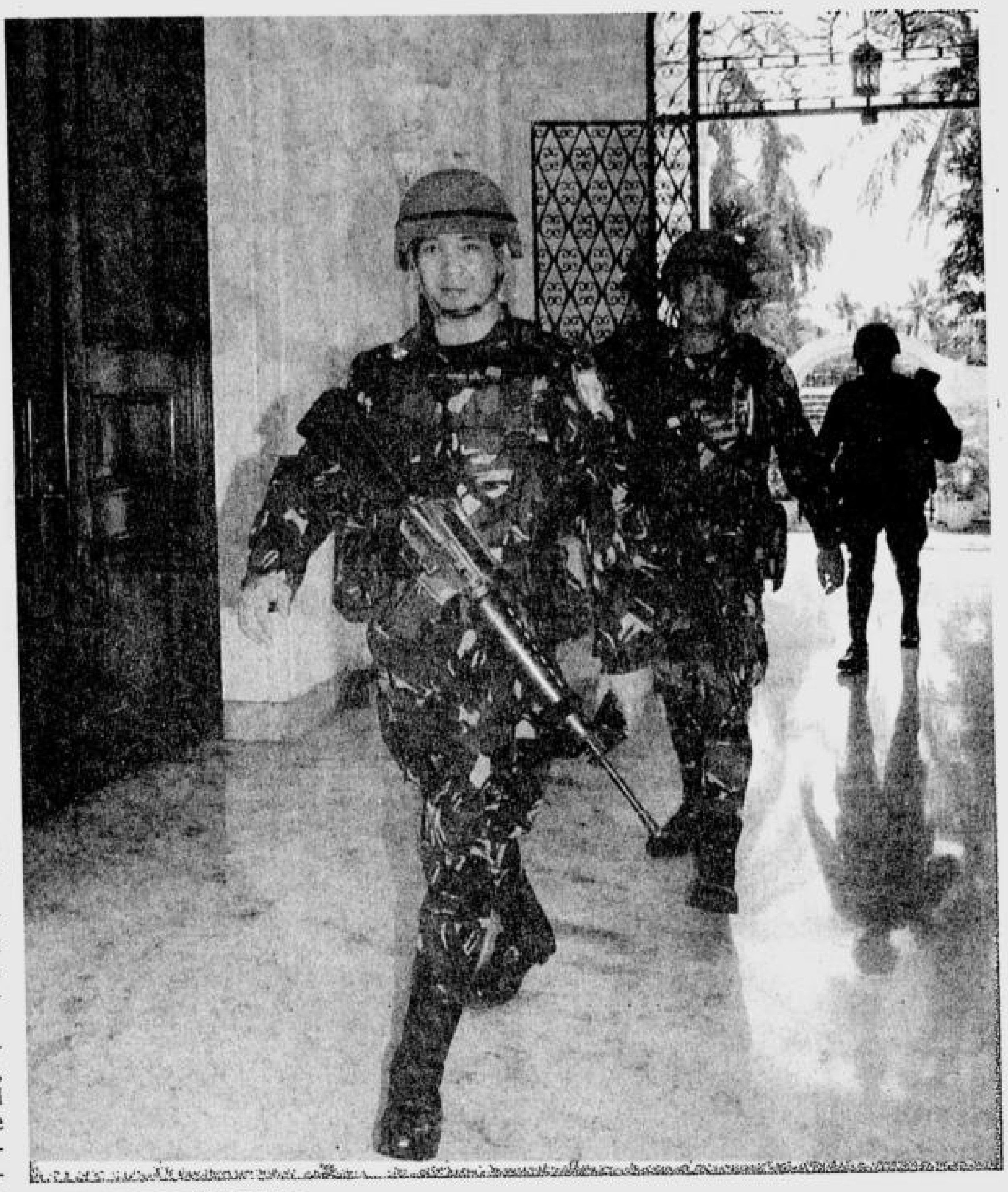
Copies of the regulation dated Dec. 29, 1967, which reportedly sets guidelines for handling classified information, were not made available.

But earlier, Kison said the regulation would be invoked should Congress require the military to turn in the fact-finding report that cleared four generals implicated in the "Hello Garci" election fraud scandal.

The AFP has been heavily criticized for refusing to disclose in full the report submitted by a panel headed by Vice Admiral Mateo Mayuga, the Navy chief.

Mayuga released a summary of the findings on April 13, six months after the investigation was concluded and after Malacanang gave the go-signal.

Since the "Hello Garci" scandal broke out in June last year, the military has been accused of covering up for intelligence personnel suspected of wiretapping President Macapagal-Arroyo and other officials during the 2004 presidential election.



STILL IN BATTLE GEAR

Members of the Presidential Security Group stride through Malacañang's Kalayaan Hall still in full battle gear a day after protest rallies marked the commemoration of Labor Day. LYN RILLON

Media group says GMA doesn't understand . . .

From page A1

tive Journalism] indicates a concern that has little to do with encouragement of rebellion," the group said.

"As a nation that had previously endured a dictatorship, we should condemn any move toward the suppression of democratic rights and liberties," it said.

The FFFJ said last week that Probe Productions had received a warning from the National Telecommunications Commission for airing an interview with rebel soldier 1st Lt. Sonny Sarmiento.

At the time, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez himself ordered the National Bureau of Investigation to look into the supposed liability of the show's producers in the interview.

Gonzalez said there was "a thin line" between "freedom of the press and the press being used to propagate the cause of rebellion."

But, according to the FFFJ, "there is a thin line that separates legitimate complaint against irresponsible journalism and intolerance for scrutiny and public evaluation."

It also pointed out that a few weeks ago, Jonathan Tiongco, who has connections to Ms Arroyo's chief of staff, Michael Defensor, had applied for a warrant to search the offices of the PCIJ.

It quoted PCIJ staff members as saying that their office had "suddenly become the subject of inquiries from strangers asking about their office hours and whereabouts."

76 killed since '86

Jose Torres, spokesperson of the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines (NUJP), said 76 journalists had been killed while working in the line of duty since 1986.

"Even if fewer journalists have died this year so far, this does not mean the threats to press freedom have eased. We should blame the President for these killings because it is her responsibility to take care of press freedom and implement laws to protect it," Torres said.

Said Vergel Santos of the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility: "The press has never been under siege as it is now. The media must come to the realization that our freedom is under attack. To preserve it, we must be more aggressive than ever. This is a government that is making life difficult for journalists. It decides for you when and what to say."

Santos said the number of journalists killed was sufficient evidence "that we are deeply threatened."

"Hardly anyone has been jailed for the crimes. By not doing anything, the Arroyo administration is just as culpable. It must cultivate a climate of freedom, but [it is] not doing this," he said.

Torres stressed that the prosecution of the killers of journalists and the police investigation of the cases should continue.

He said the media industry should also take stock of the salaries and benefits of its practitioners.

"There will be no real press freedom if working journalists remain poor and threats to their lives still abound," he said.

'Most dangerous country'

The New York-based Freedom House, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working for democracy and freedom around the world, said last week that press freedom "suffered setbacks in a number of important countries in Asia and Africa in 2005," including the Philippines.

It said in a survey report that the Philippines was only "partly free," with press freedom declining because of the continued "high level" of physical violence against journalists.

The International Press Institute, a global network of editors, media executives and leading journalists dedicated to the safeguarding of press freedom, among other things, also said the Philippines was "the most dangerous country, and its government appears to be encouraging the violence by failing to properly investigate the murders."

But two of the President's allies in Congress, Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino Libanan and Davao del Sur Rep. Douglas Cagas, yesterday said the report of Freedom House was "unfair and inaccurate."

Cagas said press freedom was freely exercised in the country, "as shown by unrestricted media reports" on alleged wrongdoing in the government.

Libanan said the fact that critics of the President and the press could "liberally criticize" the Arroyo administration proved that press freedom was "very much alive in the country."

But they acknowledged the urgent need to solve the media killings.

"In the first place, the government is not responsible for these killings. But we call on the [Philippine National Police] to work double-time to solve these killings and prosecute those responsible," Cagas said.

Still, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said the Freedom House report proved the claim of the opposition that the country was under "undeclared martial rule."

"The media should continue to stand firm and never be intimidated in reporting the true state of affairs in the country," he said.

House resolution

Members of the House prepared to file today a resolution honoring journalists killed in the line of duty for keeping "the fire of democracy" alive.

In separate interviews, Representatives Robert Ace Barbers, Imee Marcos, Gilbert Remulla, Juan Edgardo Angara and Joel Villanueva said the current generation of Filipinos should be grateful to print, broadcast and TV journalists who valiantly fight for freedom of expression and civil rights even during times of oppression.

Marcos is the principal author of the resolution, but the other lawmakers said they would endorse it or file similar measures today.

According to Barbers, "a frightened media is comparable to the era of barbarians."

He called on the public to remember "those who have fallen" just to preserve the democratic way of life.

Said Villanueva: "It should be [a conscious effort of every Filipino] to be grateful to them. Journalists are like soldiers who go to war risking their lives to make sure the people continue to enjoy freedom, and like our soldiers, they should be accorded full honors."

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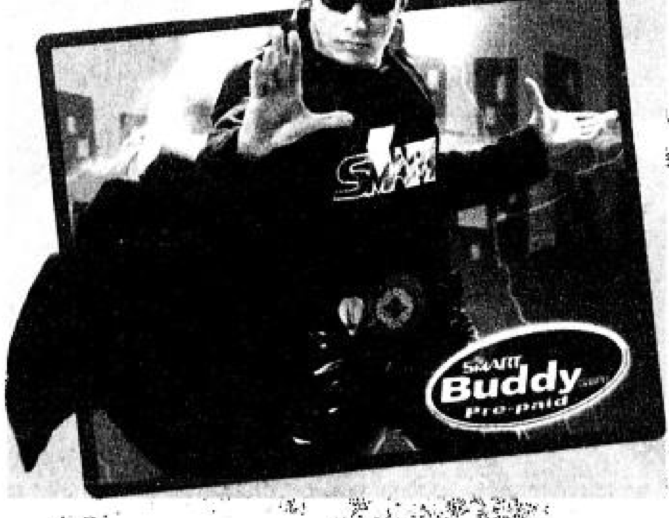
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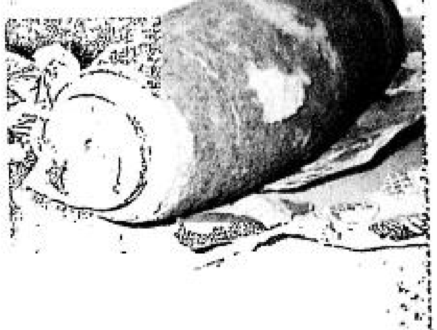


2 banks lose millions to con artists

NBI warns against phone transactions

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION has warned bank officials to be more careful in dealing with new clients after two banks in Metro Manila lost millions of pesos to alleged con artists.

Ruel Lasala, chief of the NBI National Capital Region (NCR) office, said one bank lost P25 million in December 2005 while another lost P1.3 million last month—to men who had posed as traders.

"Officials have refused to reveal the names of their banks for fear of public panic and outrage," Lasala told reporters in an interview.

The NBI official said they were still trying to determine if the two suspects were members of the same syndicate.

How they did it

According to Lasala, both men used the same modus operandi. They first opened a savings or checking account with the bank, making an initial deposit of less than P100,000.

This was followed by a bigger amount, until the deposit reached millions of pesos.

Shortly after, the "client" called up the bank officer and informed him that he would withdraw all the money he had in his account.

The following day, a person with a check or deposit slip bearing the client's signature appeared at the bank.

"Because the bank officer's mind was already 'conditioned' that a transaction involving the particular client would take place, he became lax in verifying the signatures and documents," Lasala said.

The signatures on the papers later turned out to be spurious.

Double whammy

After the bank officer released the money, the client called to inquire about the status of his account.

Told that the bank had already given his money to the person whom he had sent to the bank earlier, the client then denied knowledge of the transaction and demanded that the entire amount be returned to him, Lasala said.

As a result, the banks suffered a "double whammy"—after losing millions of pesos because of the fake transaction, it lost more money because it had to return the same amount to the client.

"We are asking bank officers to be cautious in dealing with new clients and ensure that over-the-phone transactions are conducted carefully," Lasala said.

Makeover in the works for Amoranto

By DJ Yap

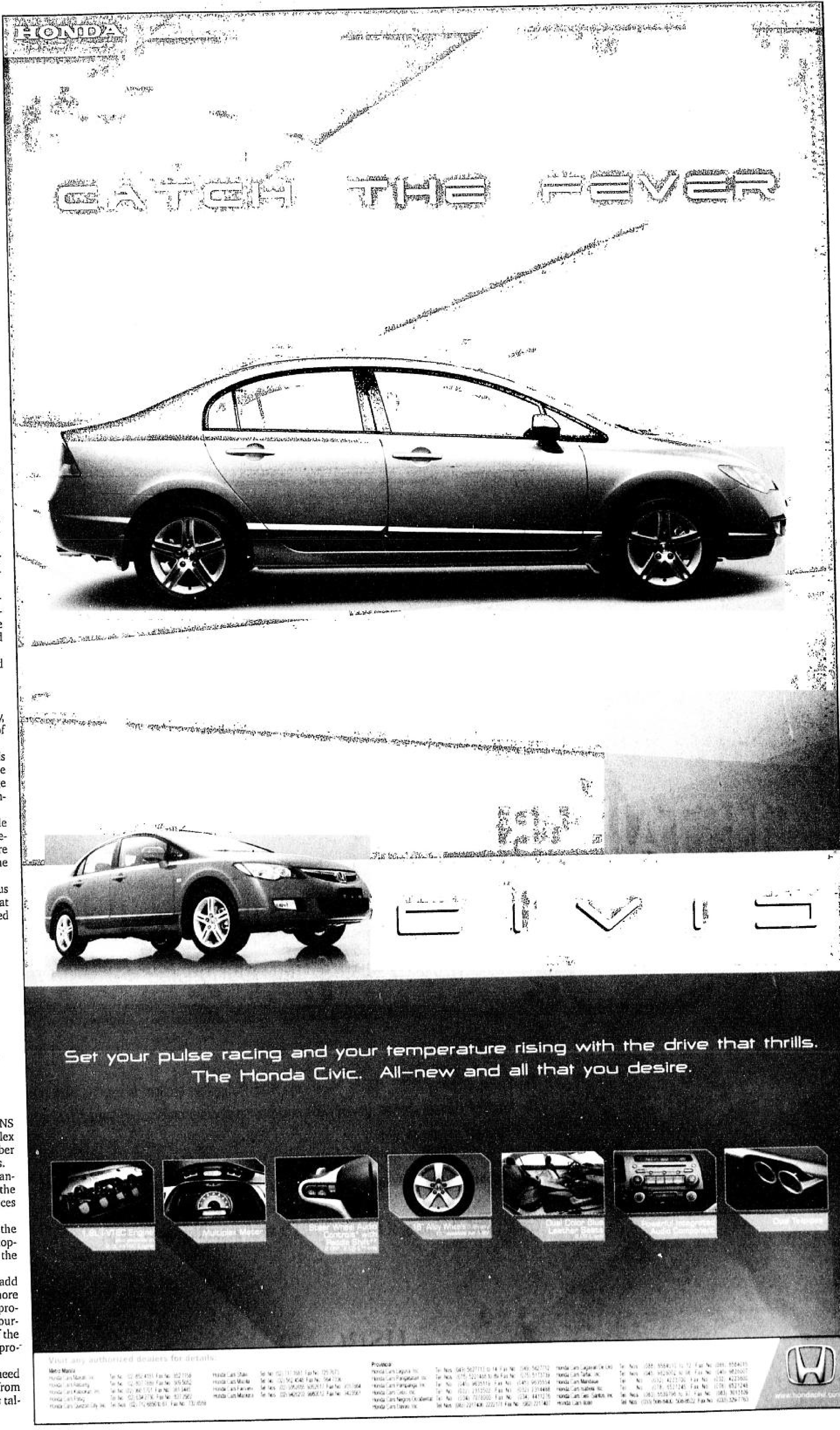
THE QUEZON CITY GOVERNMENT PLANS to modernize the Amoranto Sports Complex in a bid to develop an international-caliber sports program for the city's young athletes.

Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. made the announcement during the recent opening of the Batang QC Olympics at the stadium on Roces Avenue in Barangay Paligsahan.

Belmonte stressed the need to develop the lone city-owned center for sports development, into a world-class stadium to meet the needs of the city's athletes.

According to him, Quezon City should add to its pool of athletic talents by making more residents conscious of the city's sports programs. He added that the yearly sports tournament for the youth was an indication of the strides being made by the city in terms of promoting sports consciousness.

Vice Mayor Herbert Bautista cited the need to get the participation of the barangays, from which the city had been mining its sports talents.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Taguig community up in arms vs project

Housing scheme displaced lives, claim irate Bicutan residents

By Jocelyn R. Uy

TENSION GRIPPED A CROWDED community in Taguig City before midnight Monday when some 200 people living beside the site of a local government housing project threw stones at the fence surrounding the site.

Residents of a depressed area on the PNR Site, FTI Complex in Barangay Western Bicutan said they were protesting against the construction of the Habitat for Humanity housing project.

They also accused the Taguig City government of starting the two fires that broke out in their neighborhood last month, alleging that this was a tactic to force them out of the area to pave the way for the project on the 11.8-ha government property.

Construction on the housing project began last month.

The residents were pacified only when several policemen and barangay watchmen went to the area to talk to them.

April Al-Raschid, FTI satellite government office manager, meanwhile, denied the residents' claims and said that the local government was implementing the housing project for their benefit.

"The people behind the rumors are those who do not want to participate in the housing solution. What they want is the land, not houses, to be awarded to them," she told the INQUIRER.

Al-Raschid said the housing project will initially benefit 100 families out of the 4,000 residents who live beside the railroad tracks.

"If the project works out, that's the time we will build a Habitat community," she added.

She added that her office would hold a dialogue with residents within the week to settle the issue.

SCENE STEALER
PO2 Edmundo Dionisio provided comic relief for policemen tasked to keep ralliers away from the Don Chino Roces Bridge (formerly Mendiola) on May 1, Labor Day. One of those who watched Dionisio's impromptu stand-up comedy act was Metro police chief Vidal Querol. EDWIN BACASMAS

Pasig chocolate factory allowed to reopen for 15 days

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

PASIG CITY OFFICIALS HAVE allowed the chocolate factory owned by the Universal Robina Corp. to temporarily reopen just seven days after it was closed down for alleged violations of the antipollution law.

The factory resumed operations last Friday after management promised city officials that they would install antipollution devices in 30 days.

The City Environment and Natural Resources Office, however, will closely monitor the factory's operations for 15 days to determine whether or not it should be allowed to continue operating or if it should be shut down again.

The factory in Barangay Bagong Ilog was closed on April 20 after residents complained they had developed respiratory and skin illnesses .

"The factory was allowed to reopen last Friday after they agreed to several conditions to minimize the pollution during our public hearing," Cenro chief Raquel Naciongayo told the INQUIRER.

"We might extend the temporary reopening to another 15 days or reinstate the closure depending on the complainants," Naciongayo said.

The city government is also closely monitoring 12 other factories under its jurisdiction for possible violations of the antipollution law.

Binay vs Lapid: The battle begins

By Tarra V. Quismundo

EXPECT THE RACE NEXT YEAR for Makati City mayor to be interesting. "Rambotito" has just taken on the challenge of "Leon Guerrero."

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay yesterday said he was ready to face Sen. Lito Lapid if the actor, who had portrayed several characters, including Leon Guerrero, a local version of the "Lone Ranger," decides to push through with his plan to run for city mayor in 2007.

Binay, who earned the tag "Rambotito" after he was spotted wearing a flak jacket and toting an M-16 rifle at the height of a coup attempt against then president Corazon Aquino, described the electoral contest, however, as a "war by proxy."

"They (President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo) can use their power, influence and money. In the end, the people of Makati will be the ones to decide," Binay said in a statement.

"That would be a dream fight, but sadly, it seems that the Arroyos would rather have someone else to do the fighting for them," the mayor added.

Lapid, who like Ms Macapagal-Arroyo, is from Pampanga, had told reporters that the First Couple have convinced him to challenge Binay next year, should the latter run for a third and final term as mayor.

Lapid said one of his reasons for running was to stop the antigovernment rallies being held in Makati. Binay is the head of the United Opposition.

Binay, however, retorted: "It is rather naïve to run on a platform of disrespect for the Constitution.

"The people of Makati judge their candidates on the basis of performance, not popularity. Anyone who has ran a local campaign should know this."

METROBRIEFS

Workers find bomb

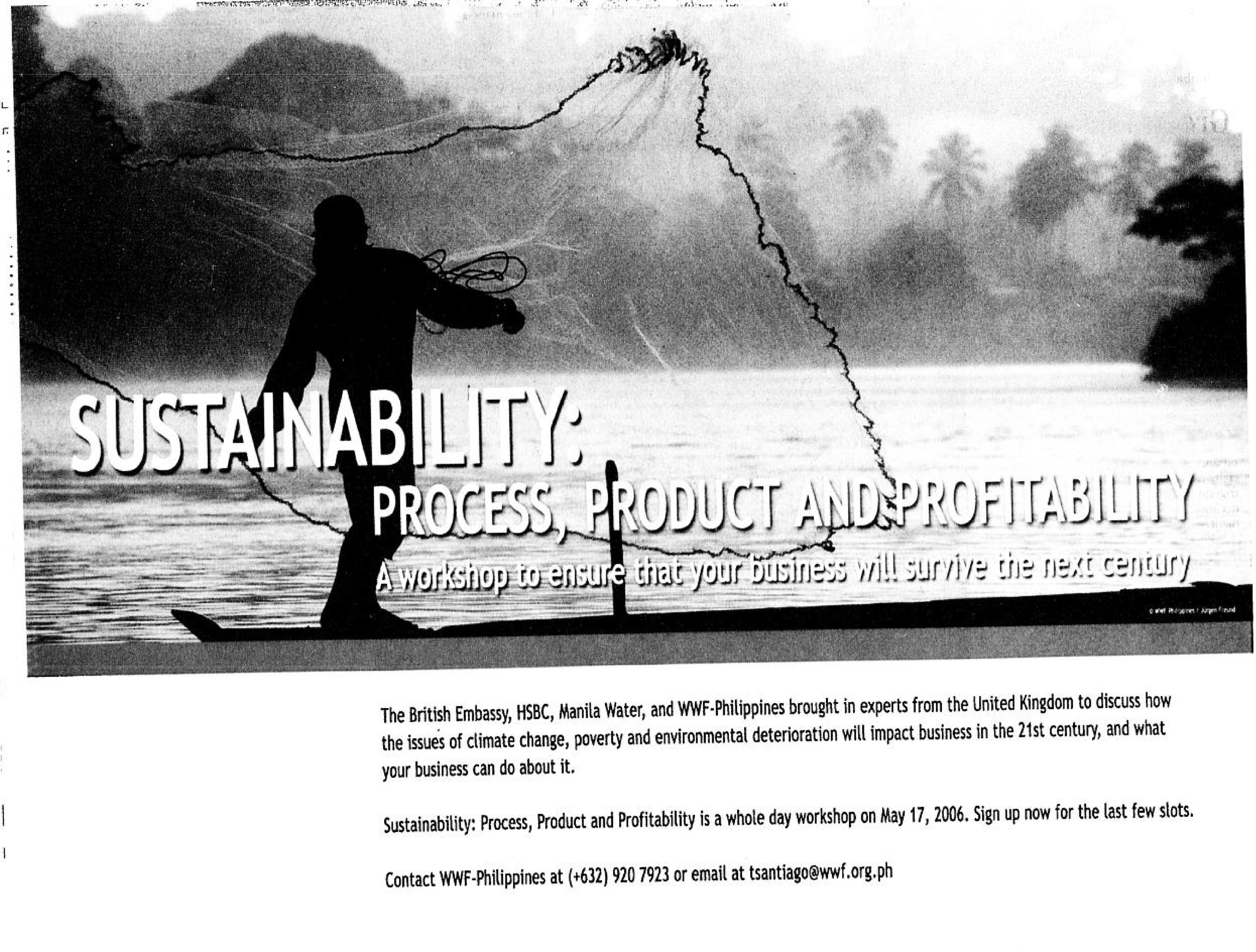
A VINTAGE bomb was dug up last week by construction workers in one of Makati's major thoroughfares, the city police said yesterday. The construction workers found the bomb on Thursday afternoon, after they had dug a hole more than five meters deep in front of 6750, an establishment on Ayala Avenue. They promptly called in the city's Special Weapons and Tactics team which recovered the bomb and turned it over to the Southern Police District for safekeeping. "This is part of what was left here during World War 2. Vintage bombs are safe as long as they are underneath. There is no reason to be worried about it," said Senior Supt. Marietto Valerio, city police chief. SWAT officer in charge SPO3 Edwin Quilala said the "general purpose" bomb weighed about 250 pounds. The police has instructed construction workers and security officers in the area to immediately call up the Makati SWAT team should they discover more vintage bombs.

Tarra V. Quismundo

Life term for rapist

A MAN was sentenced to life imprisonment by a Quezon City court yesterday for raping his neighbor's wife, a mother of three, five years ago. Judge Ma. Theresa Yadao of the QC Regional Trial Court Branch 81 found Evan Ado guilty of rape and on top of the prison term, ordered him to pay his victim P100,000 in moral damages and civil indemnity. Court records showed that the victim was sleeping early in the morning of Oct. 9, 2001 when someone switched off the light inside their shanty on Doña Nicasia Street in Barangay Payatas. But the victim said she was able to recognize Ado, her husband's frequent drinking buddy, when he pulled her into a closet and raped her at knife-point. Yadao gave more credence to the victim's straightforward account of the crime than the accused's alibi that he was attending a wake at the time of the incident. The court noted that Ado was not able to produce a witness to corroborate his alibi, adding that the place where the wake was held was only five minutes away from the victim's house.

DJ Yap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BEE PROTEST
South Korean bee farmer Ahn Sang-kyu, swarmed with 180,000 bees, jumps on a mock Japanese flag at his protest in Seoul, May 2. REUTERS

Iran seeks UN action on US threat of attack

TEHRAN—IRAN COMPLAINED TO UN SECretary General Kofi Annan Monday over what it perceives as the threat of a United States attack, as the regime continued to defy demands to halt its disputed nuclear drive.

In a letter forwarded to the United Nations chief by Iran's ambassador in New York, Mohammad Javad Zarif, the regime condemned "American officials for their illegitimate and open threats to use force against the Islamic republic of Iran." "These are in obvious contravention of international rules and the principles of the United Nations," the letter was quoted as saying by the official news agency IRNA.

It said that "these rude threats have recently been publicized through some reports in US newspapers," and noted a report in The New Yorker magazine last month which said US military planners had even looked into using nuclear 'bunker-busters' to strike Iran's atomic facilities.

"These (threats) have entered a new stage, with the refusal of US officials to deny these reports," the letter said, calling for "serious attention" as well as "quick and firm action" from the world body.

The complaint came as diplomats from the five permanent Council members and Germany were to meet in Paris Tuesday and again at the foreign ministers level in New York on May 9, following up on an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report confirming Iran has not complied with demands to freeze uranium enrichment.

The United States and Europe are hoping a reluctant Russia and China will agree to a robust resolution that legally obliges Iran to halt the sensitive work—which makes reactor fuel but can also be extended to make the core of an atom bomb.

But even if they succeed in reaching a consensus, Iran looked unlikely to back down.

"The struggle of the Iranian people against the United States is like the struggle between Moses and the pharaoh," commented Mohsen Rezai, the right-wing secretary of the country's top political arbitration body, the Expediency Council.

"For the Americans, it is not a nuclear issue but one of Iran progressing to become developed and powerful," he told the ISNA news agency, repeating the regime's view that the crisis is merely an extension of US ambitions to see the ouster of Iran's ruling clerics.

Iran's top national security official Ali Larijani also argued that there was "no sense" in the country returning to a suspension of enrichment.

"A suspension does not make any sense to us, because we do not think an atomic bomb can come out of a 164 centrifuge cascade," he was quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency.

Iran has installed 164 centrifuges at a pilot plant in Natanz, situated in the desert south of Tehran. *AFP*

Toilet paper now a luxury in Zimbabwe

HARARE—HOW BAD IS INFLAtion in Zimbabwe? Well, consider this: At a supermarket near the center of this tatterdemalion capital, toilet paper costs $417.

No, not per roll. Four hundred seventeen Zimbabwean dollars is the value of a single two-ply sheet. A roll costs $145,750—in American currency, about 69 cents.

The price of toilet paper, like everything else here, soars almost daily, spawning mirthless jokes about an impending better use for Zimbabwe's $500 bill, now the smallest in circulation.

But what is happening is no laughing matter. For untold numbers of Zimbabweans, toilet paper—and bread, margarine, meat, even the once-ubiquitous morning cup of tea—have become unimaginable luxuries. All are casualties of hyperinflation that is roaring toward 1,000 percent a year, a rate usually seen only in war zones.

Zimbabwe has been tormented this entire decade by both deep recession and high inflation, but in recent months the economy seems to have abandoned whatever moorings it had left. The national budget for 2006 already has been largely spent. Government services have started to crumble.

Harare's drinking water, siphoned from a lake downstream of its sewer outfall, has been unreliably pure for months, and dysentery and cholera swept the city in December and January. The city suffers rolling electrical blackouts. Mounds of uncollected garbage pile up on the streets of the slums.

The jobless—officially 70 percent of Zimbabwe's 4.2 million workers, but widely placed at 80 percent when idle farmers are included—furtively hawk tomatoes and baggies of ground corn from roadside tables, an occupation banned by police since last May. *New York Times News Service*

Bomb-making video seized in Indon raid

JAKARTA—VIDEO FOOTAGE SEIZED IN A raid on the hideout of Southeast Asia's terror chief gives step-by-step instructions on how to assemble bombs, police said Tuesday, raising concerns that al-Qaida linked militants were planning an attack.

Police spokesperson Brig. Gen. Anton Bachrul Alam also said a small explosive found in a backpack—almost identical to the bombs used in last year's triple suicide blasts on Bali island—was active "and ready for use."

The discoveries followed a pre-dawn raid Saturday on the hideout of Noordin Top, believed to be a key leader of the Jemaah Islamiyah terror network.

Bachrul Alam said police believe Noordin had been at the location that day, but was gone when they launched the operation, in which two of his associates were killed and two others arrested.

The video footage was recovered from a computer found at the site in the town of Wonosobo, Central Java, along with explosives, detonators, guns and ammunition. Investigators are still "studying the content, which includes among other things, techniques on how to assemble bombs from small to large," Bachrul Alam said. Police also are searching for a man said to be traveling with Noordin, but they declined to release his name. *AP*

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Greenhouse gases rising steadily

WASHINGTON—GREENHOUSE gases—the heat-trapping chemicals linked to global warming—continued to increase steadily in 2005, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported on Monday.

Carbon dioxide, emitted by coal-burning power plants and cars, increased last year, according to the federal climate agency's Annual Greenhouse Gas Index, or AGGI. So did nitrous oxide, a byproduct of farming and industry.

But methane emissions leveled off and chlorofluorocarbons, artificially-made chemicals used in refrigerators and air conditioners, declined, the agency said in a statement.

"Overall, the AGGI shows a continuing, steady rise in the amount of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere," the agency said.

The AGGI showed a 1.25 percent rise in overall greenhouse gases in 2005. The index stood at 1.215 in 2005 compared to a 1990 base of 1.00, reflecting a steady rise in greenhouse gases over the past 15 years.

The index is based on the levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere in 1990, a year chosen because the global Kyoto Protocol that aims to limit emissions of these gases also picked it as a baseline.

The constant or dropping rates of methane and chlorofluorocarbons, also known as CFCs, have slightly slowed the overall growth rate.

By contrast, global carbon dioxide increased from an average of 376.8 parts per million in 2004 to 378.9 parts per million last year. The pre-industrial era level of carbon dioxide, a major influence on global warming, was about 278 parts per million.

A global network has measured levels of these chemicals, and chemicals that have replaced CFCs, since 1979. The first AGGI was released last year. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

34 Hindus killed in massacre

JAMMU, India—Suspected Islamic militants massacred 34 Hindus in Indian Kashmir in attacks aimed at wrecking peace talks between the government and moderate separatists, officials said Monday. Twenty-two unarmed villagers, mostly shepherds or their families, were lined up and gunned down in Thawa village in the southern district of Doda on Sunday night. In the neighboring district of Udhampur, 12 Hindus kidnapped Sunday by suspected rebels were shot dead. Four bodies were found Sunday and eight more Monday. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and a Muslim separatist leader condemned the sectarian massacres, the worst for six years in the state. None of Kashmir's two dozen Islamist rebel groups claimed responsibility for the two attacks. The Press Trust of India quoted unidentified army officials as saying the Thawa massacre was carried out by guerrillas belonging to Lashkar-e-Taiba, or Army of the Pious, which has been blamed for many major attacks in India. *AFP*

101 detained over E. Timor riots

DILI—Some 101 suspects accused of involvement in deadly riots in East Timor last week are being detained after 25 more arrests were made, the foreign ministry said Tuesday. Thirteen of those held were among nearly 600 soldiers, or a third of the tiny nation's armed forces, who deserted the army in February complaining of discrimination and were sacked in March, the ministry said. "The Ombudsman will have unrestricted access to all detainees," it said in a statement. The dismissal of the soldiers prompted protests last week which degenerated into violence on Friday, leading to the deaths of four people and prompting thousands to flee their homes. The ministry said life in Dili and its surroundings was returning to normal "with only a few isolated minor incidents which were dealt (with) peacefully by police." *AFP*

Ex-professor gets over 4 years

TAMPA, Fla.—Former Florida university professor Sami al-Arian was sentenced to four years and nine months in prison on Monday for aiding the Palestinian group Islamic Jihad. US District Judge James Moody sentenced al-Arian to the maximum 57 months in prison but gave him credit for 38 months he has already served. He will have to serve the balance, 19 months, before being deported, prosecutors said. Al-Arian, 48, was arrested in February 2003 on charges he gave money and support to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which has been designated a terrorist organization by the United States. The case was built on thousands of hours of wiretapped phone calls and intercepted e-mails gathered over a decade. Al-Arian was acquitted on eight of the 17 charges against him last December after a six-month trial with three co-defendants. *Reuters*

Roadside bombs kill 3 in Iraq

BAGHDAD—Three roadside bombs killed a US Army soldier and two Iraqi civilians, and police found the bodies of four Iraqi men in Baghdad who apparently had been kidnapped and tortured, police said Tuesday. The American casualty occurred about 9:50 p.m. Monday, approximately 60 km south of Baghdad. The area is part of the infamous "triangle of death" and the scene of numerous ambushes against US and Iraqi troops, foreigners and Shiite civilians. The bombing raised to at least 2,406 the number of members of the U.S. military who have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count *AP*

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Bolivian gov't seizes oil, gas fields

LA PAZ—TROOPS SEIZED 56 OIL AND GAS fields Monday as President Evo Morales decreed nationalization of Bolivia's oil and gas industry, to be followed by mining, forestry and land.

"We are beginning by nationalizing oil and gas, tomorrow we will add mining, forestry and all natural resources, what our ancestors fought for," he said.

Top military commanders announced seizure of the fields moments after Morales issued the formal decree, which had been expected. "The state is recovering its property, the possession and total and absolute control of these resources," Morales said at a May Day speech at San Alberto gas field in southern Bolivia.

He called on the country's "patriots" to "mobilize against any effort by any company to sabotage" the operation.

The left-wing leader called the move a "true nationalization" that would help the economy and generate jobs in South America's poorest country, where 70 percent of the population lives in poverty.

Morales said foreign energy companies would have 180 days to agree on new contracts with the state-run oil firm, Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB). During the transition, YPFB would take 82 percent of revenues, producers 18 percent.

"Only companies that respect these new terms will be allowed to operate in the country," Morales said. Morales was elected in December pledging to take a bigger share of Bolivia's energy industry, which accounts for about 15 percent of its economic output. Two of his predecessors were toppled by demonstrations demanding control of Bolivia's gas.

Bolivia has the second-largest gas reserves in South America, with an estimated 54 trillion cubic feet, behind Venezuela. The country produces a modest 40,000 barrels per day of crude oil.

The measure affects some 20 foreign oil companies, including Spain's Repsol, Petrobras of Brazil, Britain's BP and British Gas, US-based ExxonMobil and French group Total.

Although the move was expected to have little impact on global energy supplies, financial markets reacted by pushing prices higher.

"It's part of a trend of governments taking strident action to protect either national resources or to nationalize formerly privately owned oil resources amid the environment of very high oil prices," said Bill Farren-Price, deputy editor of the Cyprus-based Middle East Economic Survey.

Morales has repeatedly said nationalizations would not include expropriation of oil companies' assets. He says current contracts violate the constitution, which declares all reserves state property, which may not be relinquished. *AFP*

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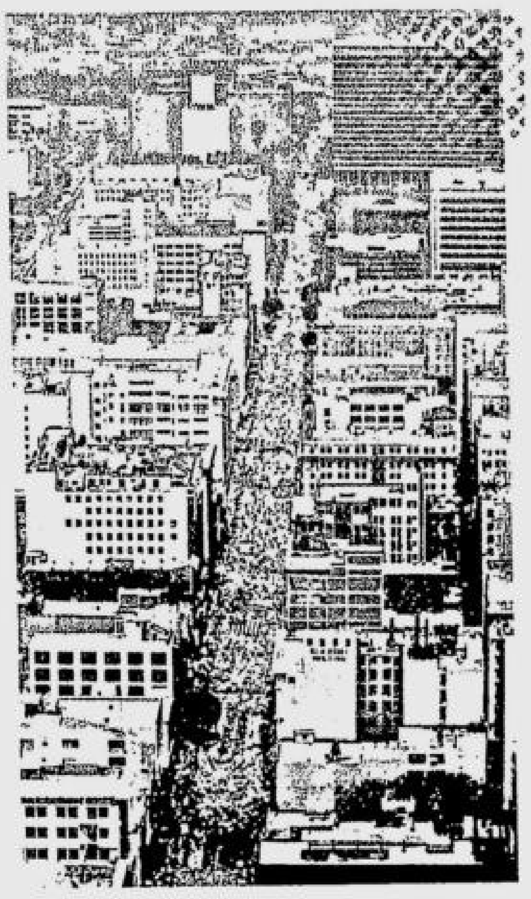
PEOPLE participate in a rally against proposed changes in US immigration law Monday, May 1, in Los Angeles. AP

1M immigrants stage protests across the US

LOS ANGELES—MORE THAN ONE MILLION mostly Hispanic immigrants rallied across the United States on Monday after launching a historic economic boycott to demand rights for millions of illegal workers.

"We can do it!" and "USA, USA!" chanted throngs of white-clad protesters that marched in cities like Los Angeles and Chicago, staying away from work, school and shops across the nation.

The unprecedented one-day action, broadly supported by the 40-million-strong Latino community and dubbed the "Day Without Immigrants," was part of a mounting but peaceful campaign against plans for a legal clampdown on illegal entrants.

Here in Los Angeles at least 600,000 people marched in two major rallies, while more than 400,000 others rallied in the midwestern city of Chicago. The Los Angeles Police Department said that at least 400,000 people had attended an early evening rally while another 250,000 took part in a protest earlier in the day.

It was unclear how many protesters had attended both rallies, but the crowd count appeared conservative as reporters on the scene estimated the crowd at the earlier rally at more than 500,000, while organizers claimed that around 1.5 million people had taken part.

Los Angeles, which is almost 50 percent Hispanic, has been a focal point for weeks of protests that some analysts are starting to compare to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. There were more than 500,000 people at a Los Angeles protest on March 25.

"I'm here in solidarity with all those people who have crossed (the border) and died and for all the people who are here and should be given the right to everything that we have on this land," said protester Rachel Sanchez.

"Today we march, tomorrow we vote and if they deport us we will jump over the border fence," chanted the marchers as they waved US and Mexican flags.

Large swathes of Los Angeles were shut down by the boycott and almost-festive protests that were punctuated by drumbeats and songs.

The boycott left the second largest US city's usually snarled freeways empty and virtually halted deliveries to and from its port.

Los Angeles-based welder Mosses Gomez, 29, took the day off work, costing him around 100 dollars, to protest.

"The government knows now that we have a voice and our voice has to be heard," he said. "We still come through and make America what it is now. Without us, the government's nothing."

Around 75,000 demonstrators turned out in the Colorado city of Denver, while tens of thousands of others also turned out in New York, Atlanta, San Francisco, Oakland, San Diego and in the state of Florida. *AFP*

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SPORTS

Editor **Teddyvic S. Melendres**

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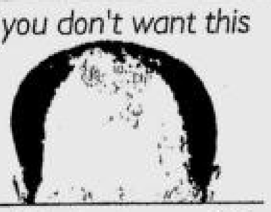

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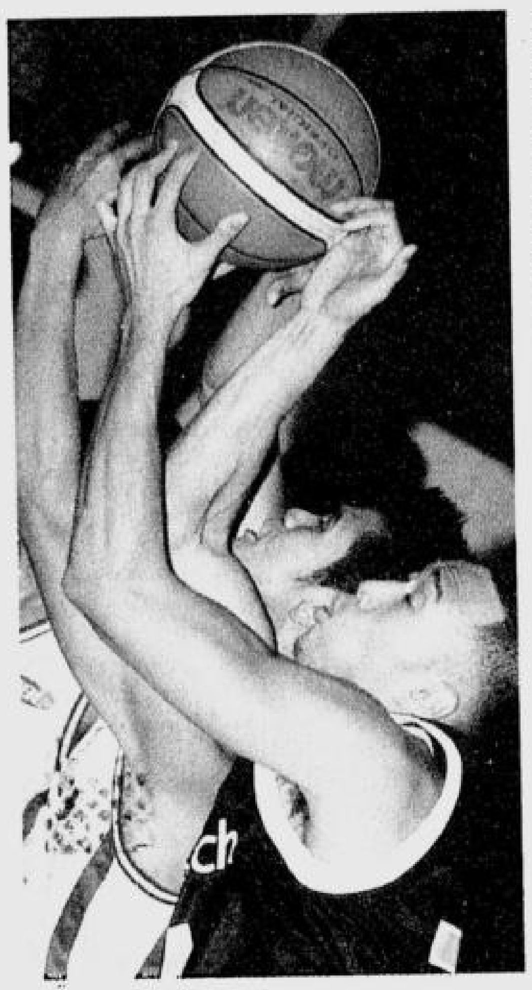
Jewels dazzle Spinners, stay on top of PBL heap

Tang lifts TeleTech Titans over Granny Goose in thriller

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Fiery starts for two PAF squads** /A31
- **Clippers end drought; Mavs sweep Grizzlies** /A32



TELETECH'S Mike Dizon (front) and Granny Goose's Eder John Saldua dispute possession in the game yesterday. ERIK ARAZAS

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE MONTAÑA JEWELS, drawing steady fire from their starting forwards, fought off a late charge by the Magnolia Spinners to score an 85-79 victory yesterday in the PBL Unity Cup at the San Andres Gym.

GAMES TOMORROW
(*Olivarez Sports Center*)
2 p.m.—Harbour Centre vs Hapee-PCU
4 p.m.—Toyota Otis vs Rain or Shine

Al Magpayo and Eric dela Cuesta combined for 39 points as the Jewels blew the Spinners away with an 80-66 lead in the last quarter and keep an iron grip on the tournament's solo lead.

"We came well-prepared and I give credit to all the boys," said coach Nel Parado after the Jewels improved their league-best record to 8-2. "It was pure hard work."

Earlier, TY Tang rescued Teletech from another late-game collapse with a jumper and two free throws as the league's rookie team nipped Granny Goose, 76-74.

The Titans, who lost their last two outings by blowing huge leads, seemed headed for another breakdown until Tang took over in the final 32 seconds of the match.

"We had to look at ourselves because of our meltdowns in the third and fourth quarters," said rookie coach Jerry Codiñera, whose Titans bungled a 17-point lead, 65-48, early in the fourth period. "The team is improving. We're continuing to develop our character."

The Titans posted only their second victory in 10 games—both against Granny Goose, which slipped to 5-5. Magnolia Ice Cream fell into a tie with Harbour Centre at 4-6.

JR Quiñahan sparked the Tortillos' rally from 17 points down with Jireh Ibañes' jumper tying the match at 70, 1:52 left.

After another deadlock at 72, Tang buried a jumper that gave the Titans the lead with only 32.1 ticks remaining, and then iced the match with a pair of charities 13 seconds later.

The scores:

First Game

TELETECH 76—Gelig 14, Doruelo 12, Tang 11, Mercado 9, Villamin 9, Estrada 7, Latoreno 3, Sierra 3, Magdadaro 3, Dizon 2, Capus 2, Duncil 1, Tolentino 0.

GRANNY GOOSE 74—Ibañes 14, Grijaldo 13, Quiñahan 11, Cruz 10, Santos 6, Latonio 5, Dela Peña 4, Saldua 3, Alfad 2, Concha 2, Ferrer 2, Ababon 0.

Quarters: 17-8, 36-34, 61-46, 76-74

Second Game

MONTAÑA 85—Magpayo 21, Dela Cuesta 18, Juntilla 11, Bonus 10, Rodriguez 10, Bono 6, Baguion 4, Guerrero 3, Vergara 2, Compton 0.

MAGNOLIA 79—Valenzuela 24, Santos 22, Te 11, Williams 8, Co 6, Jones 4, Dela Cruz 2, Isip 2, Barcellano 0, Misolas 0

Quarters: 24-24, 46-40, 66-52, 85-79

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XTRA MILE Challenge

Tigers take on Realtors

THE WEEK-LONG ALL-STAR break could put any team off-tangent. But not for coach Binky Favis and his Coca-Cola Tigers.

Immediately after the All-Star contingent arrived from Cagayan de Oro Sunday, the Tigers wasted no time trooping to the gym in a bid to check a two-game skid in the Gran Matador-PBA Philippine Cup.

The Tigers meet the faltering Sta. Lucia Realtors at 4:40 p.m. today at the Araneta Coliseum before the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals and the Alaska Aces collide in the 7:35 mainer.

"My key players got exhausted after the All-Stars but we have to keep on pushing," said Favis, whose North squad lost to coach Jong Uichico and the South team during the All-Star week.

Coca-Cola starters John Arigo, Rafi Reavis and Ali Peek saw action in the All-Star game, Dennis Miranda played for the rookie squad in the sophomore-rookie blitz game while Will Antonio was crowned three-point king in another side event.

"Sta. Lucia will definitely zone us so we have prepared something special to fend them off," said Favis.

The Tigers defeated the Realtors in their first meeting, an overtime victory fashioned with Sta. Lucia missing its scoring trio of Kenneth Duremdes, Dennis Espino and Marlou Aquino, who was utilized sparingly at that time.

"It will be different this time. But as long as we execute perfectly on both ends of the floor, we have a good chance of duplicating that win," said Favis.

The Tigers, who absorbed back-to-back losses from Air21 and Purefoods, are running third with a 6-4 record while the Realtors, bidding to halt a three-game slide, are dead last at 2-8.

Meanwhile, the Phone Pals resume their bid for a top two slot when they tackle the unpredictable Aces.

"We're aiming for the top two seats but we're not looking far ahead," said Talk 'N Text coach Derrick Pumaren. "I don't want to put pressure on the team."

The Aces (4-6) are coming from an 11-day hiatus following a loss against the Giants in Capiz City while the Phone Pals (5-5) stumbled against the rallying San Miguel Beermen before the break.

June Navarro

STANDINGS	W	L
San Miguel	9	2
Purefoods	8	3
Coca-Cola	6	4
Talk 'N Text	5	5
Red Bull	5	6
Ginebra	4	6
Alaska	4	6
Air21	4	7
Sta. Lucia	2	8

GAMES TODAY
(Araneta Coliseum)
4:40 p.m.—Sta. Lucia vs Coca-Cola
7:35 p.m.—Alaska vs Talk 'N Text

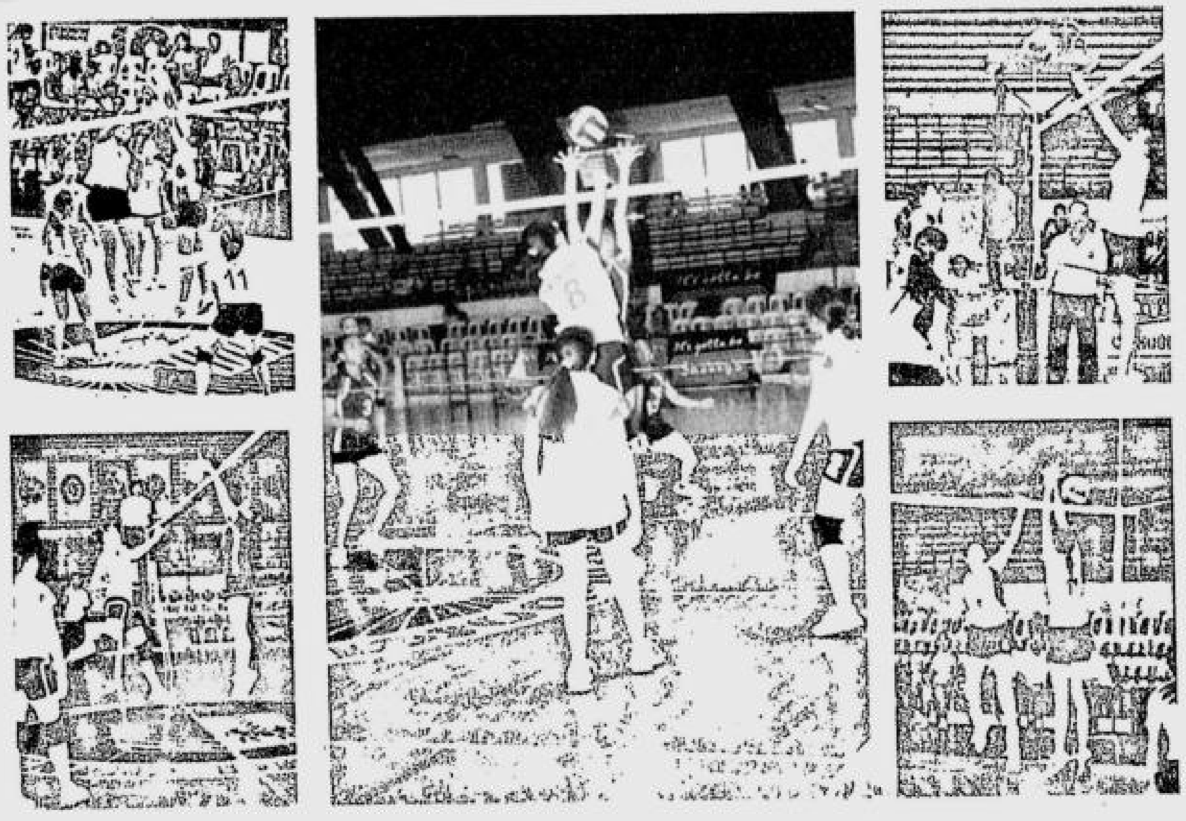
So loses final match but still nails IM result

FILIPINO FIDE MASTER WESLEY SO'S STAR continues to shine.

Barely a month after becoming the youngest ever qualifier for the Philippine men's team to the Chess Olympiad, the 12-year-old So claimed the distinction of becoming the youngest Filipino to earn an International Master result.

So gained his first IM result—despite losing his ninth and final round game against International Master Abhijeet Gupta of India on Monday—with an accumulated 2422 rating performance in the 8th Dubai Open, according to the official website of Dubai Chess.

So, of Bacoor, Cavite, finished with 5.0 points on 4 wins, 3 loss and 2 draws to finish 45th in the 141 man-field. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*



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Two amateurs show way in RP Open golf qualifying

AMATEURS ANTHONY FERNANDO AND GARY Sales carded 73s in the scorching heat to lead the chase for 10 berths in the 36-hole Philippine Open qualifier at the Villamor Golf Club yesterday.

Fernando bucked a double bogey on the par-5 No. 2 by firing three birdies coming in for nines of 39-34.

Sales gunned down back-to-back birdies from No. 11 to seize control but lost his one-stroke lead when he took his fourth bogey on No. 16. He had nines of 38-35.

Jun Cedo shot a 74 and led the pros' bid in this event conducted by the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

The top 10 players, pros and amateurs, after the two-day elims will advance to the RP Open slated May 25-28 at Wack Wack. Ties will be decided via sudden death.

Veteran campaigner Ernie Rellon, Ronald Posada and Vic Vanial came away with 75s to share fourth place with amateur Hanson So Jr., while Jun Bernis, the former national amateur champion, shot a 76 for joint eighth with pro Jun Rates and another amateur, Junro Mamaril.

FERNANDO

PAGUNSAN

Pros Danny delos Santos, Edwin Estrera, Edwin Sanchez and John Rey Pactolerin all had 77s.

Juvic Pagunsan heads the 27 Filipino pros seeded to the $200,000 RP Open, now held under the auspices of the Asian Tour.

The other outright entries include Frankie Miñoza, Angelo Que, Mars Pucay, Ramil Bisera, Gerald Rosales, Artemio Murakami, Robert Pactolerin, Carito Villaroman, Tony Lascuña, Danny Zarate, Cookie La'O, Richard Sinfuego, Rey Pagunsan and Gerard Cantada.

100 entries in SJC int'l derby

MORE THAN 100 ENTRIES ARE EXPECTED TO VIE for top honors in the first SJC 9-Cock International Derby slated June 5, 7 and 9 at the San Juan Coliseum. The event, sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000, stakes P5 million for an entry fee of P55,000. SJC pit manager Pete Rivera said all participants will be considered as hosts and entitled to 50 percent of derby proceeds. Among those competing are Sweater man Bruce Barnette, Gene Batiea of Mississippi, Japan's Morinobu Taniguchi and Riochi Saito, Bryan Cochran, Crowe Grave and Richard Borris. For inquiries, call 725-5665, 725-5369 or 0917-8041691.

GCAP 5-cocker at SJC up

THE GENTLEMEN COCKERS ASSOCIATION OF THE (GCAP) 5-cock derby unfolds at 5 p.m. today with 70 fights at the San Juan Coliseum. The derby is sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. Top-rated entries will be fielded by Rep. Butch Pichay, Jun Topacio, Gerry Ramos, Patrick Antonio, Cris Milla, Allan

SPORTSWATCH

Siaco, Tony Marfori, Golden Circle group, Raymond Velayo, Jun Jingco, Jet Fernando, Jimmy Ang, Rudy Albano, Rey Briones, Boy Royo and Pepito Ngo, Eric dela Rosa, Benjie Lim, Pol Estrellado, R. Pineda, Tos Reyes and Mayor Dennis Pineda.

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Tiger Rafly (4), Mr. Lucas (5), Gemstone (1), Raven (2)
Race 2—(Qrt/Tri)—Prin-cess Leighla (4), Jetprop (6), Black Peacock (7), Suplada (5)
Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Mano Po (3), Valiente (2), Gigi's Gold (5), Hurry Prince (1)
Race 4—(Qrt/Tri)—Kaligatan (5), Sincerity (1), Chicklet (2), Batang Kalookan (6)
Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Dixie Dash (3), Split Decision (5), Stradivarius (1), Words Of Joy (6)
Race 6—(Qrt/Tri)—Empire Lady (4), Royal Rose (7), Dark beat (8), Collective Dreams (2)
Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)— Best Strike (3)< Time Deposit (9), Il AMorosa (2), Shining Lanca (4), Idol (8)
Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Playing Cool (11), Manileno (9), Power Of Longevity (6), Pulilan Beauty (5), Super Top (1), Lovely Tara

Who will be next? Find out here on your Philippine Idol Network

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
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ABC 5				National Geographic	PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	American Idol		Billboard On-Air	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema			Pasion de Amor	Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Outstanding Twins	TV Patrol World		Pinoy Big Brother	Gulong Ng Palad	Sa Piling Mo	Panday	Wonderful Life	S.O.C.O.			Insider
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Cinemax			Invasion Of The Body Snatchers		Beyond Betrayal (4:45 PM)				A Case For Murder			Against The Ropes				The Man Who Wouldn't Die			Protocol (11:20PM)
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Your World Today			
Crime/Suspense		The Closer		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Profiler		Forensic Files	Body Of Evidence	Law & Order		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit						Bones	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven That's So Trendy Week	Wonderful World Of Disney			American Dragon	Buzz on Maggie	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Rangers	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Pro Billiards '04 Skins Billiards C'ships		Pool World Pool Masters 2001		Asian X Games '05 Presented by Kia		Motorsport Asia	NBA Anthology	Pool Snooker World Pool League '04 Poland		Pool Snooker World Pool League '04 Poland		Sportscenter Asia	Classic Boxing: J. Dempsey-Early Years		Classic Boxing Heavyweight Title Fights mid 30's		Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Will & Grace 4	Friends 10	Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Veronica Mars 2		Beach Girls		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	Cold Turkey		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
EWTN	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Faith In Motion	Truth In The Heart	Rosary With Mother Angelica	EWTN Gallery	Suffering And The Love Of God	EWTN Catholic Classic	The Church & The Poor: Building Bridges	Mother Angelica Live Classics		Daily Mass Live		Angelus (9:15 PM)	One In Their Hearts: Holiness Of Priesthood	Parable	Rome Reports	EWTN Presents	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Agawin Mo Man Ang Lahat	Now and Forever (3:15 PM)	Snow White Sweet Love		Saiyuki	Dragonball Z	Gokusan	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Majika	Encantadia	My Name Is Kim Sam Soon	Jewel In The Palace		Nuts Entertainment			Saksi
Hallmark Channel		McLeod's Daughters IV						Bewitched	The Nanny	Family Law III				Judging Amy					Judging Amy (11:45PM)
HBO		Darklight			A Promise Kept			Going Ape!			Thoughtcrimes			The Witches Of Eastwick				Highwaymen	
Hero TV	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Angelic Layer	Tokyo Underground	Metal Fighter Miku	Beyblade G-Revolution	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Naruto	Mirmo de Pon	Inuyasha	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Angelic Layer
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Global Family Series		Japan Video Topics		ME TV		PTA Best Of The Philippines		Up Close And Personal	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show David Letterman		Heat		Velocity		X-Men	Street Smarts	Mad TV		That 70s Show	My Name Is Earl	The Late Show David Letterman		The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Premium Blend	Primetime Glick	Chappelle Show
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	30 Minute Meals	Wolfgang Puck	Sweet Dreams	Interiors By Design	Decorating Style	Decorating Style	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Food 911	E! Entertainment Special		Style Star	Martha		Fine Living Special		Isaac	
MTV Philippines		Laguna Beach		MTV Screen	Pop Inc.		2006 MAA Nominee Specials	MTV Hits		Get Spotted	Get Hitch'd	MTV Screen	MTV Hits	TRL		Laguna Beach		Red Hot Chili Peppers Live At Slane Castle	
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXILOG	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Live!		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXILOG
NBN		Teledyaryo Alas-Tres		Teledyaryo Sports Alas	Dapat Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Siya?	Teledyaryo W/ Ray Langit & Angelique Lazo		Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo Final Edition				Bantay OCW With Susan K			
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	Hey Arnold!	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	All Grown Up	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Paano Ang Kahapon Kung Wala Na Ang Ngayon				23rd Floor				Bayadra Brothers				Andres Manambit Story				Bad Boy
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin		Zentrix	Kaleido Star	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Magic Ring	Irene	Noel	Project 11	Now Na!		News On Q	Balikbayan		Irene	Over The Green Fields
RPN 9						Global Window	RPN Aksyon News	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	NBA Semis/ Conference Finals						Newswatch Now	Cargo For Truth		Kerygma
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping		Quantum Global		Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		SBN Music Video			
Solar Sports									NBA Jam	Sagupaan	Enyma Ladies 9 Ball Championship						Solar Sports Desk	Table Tennis World Team Championships	
Sports Plus			Arena Football Arizona @ Dallas						Wild Side	NBA Playoffs 1st Round					NBA Playoffs 1st Round				
Star Movies		Sense And Sensibility					Hostile Hostage			Chain Reaction (7:10 PM)				Tremors II			Tremors 3: Back To Perfection		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		American Idol		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	American Idol		Grey's Anatomy		Smallville		Seinfeld	American Idol
Studio 23	Bewitched	Masked Rider Ryuki				Batman Beyond		Sports	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	The Amazing Race Family Edition		CSI (8:20 PM)	24 Season 4 (9:10 PM)		News Central	Oprah		Just Shoot Me

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Poker king Bautista bags P1M

RODEREK BAUTISTA CLAIMED THE FIRST Philippine Poker Tour (PPT) Million-Peso Hold'em gold champion bracelet and the P1 million top prize after an exhausting two-day marathon Main Event at the Casino Filipino in Parañaque Sunday.

The 28-year-old from Baguio City plans to allocate a portion of his prize money to his ongoing charity projects in his home city. The beneficiaries of his various projects include the Baguio City Jail inmates, Home for the Aged and street children.

"Eventually all the (prize) money will be used up, but I will cherish the gold champion bracelet," he said.

A total of 160 players disputed the coveted bracelet, including 110 winners from satellite events.

After six hours of preliminaries, 30 advanced to the finals with only one female—Angelica Jamlang—making the cut. The survivors were cut to 10 for the final table.

On the way to the Main Event, over 400 poker enthusiasts participated in satellite tournaments conducted over a three-month period in Baguio City, Valle Verde Country Club, San Mig Alabang. Elbow Room at the Metro-Walk, Pasig and at Rajah Hotel in Cebu City.

STANDINGS	W	L
North Division		
Bacchus/Harbour	4	2
Batang Tagaytay	4	3
Forward Taguig	3	2
Spring-Pñaque	2	3
Pangasinan	1	3
Laguna-S. Rosa	0	6
South Division		
Ozamiz Cotta	4	0
N. Cotabato	5	3
Pagadian Exp.	4	2
Iligan Crusaders	4	3
Valencia GH	2	3
Iloilo Warriors	1	4

Pangasinan out to halt skid

GAME TODAY (*MSU-IIT gym*)
7 p.m.—Pangasinan vs Iligan

ILIGAN CITY—PANGASINAN'S HUNDRED Islands try to snap out of a two-game losing spell today when it takes on the Iligan Crusaders at 7 p.m. in the 2006 Guerrero Brandy-NBC national basketball championship at the MSU-IIT gym.

Coach Jun da Jose's Pangasinenses will bank on slotman Randy Lopez, Louie Aquino and playmaker Jun Balares in their bid to improve their 1-3 card in the northern division.

"There's no other way for us to go but up," said coach Da Jose. "We need to start winning lest we get buried in the cellar."

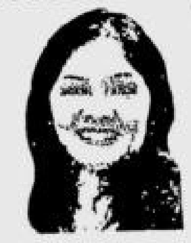
The Crusaders of Mayor Lawrence Cruz, though, are slightly favored. Carrying the load for Iligan are last year's MVP Christian Nicdao, gunners Derrick Hubalde, Ferdie Go and Ollan Omiping and playmaker Marlon Kalaw.

The Crusaders, managed by Freddie Siao, will gun for their fifth win in eight games in the southern division.

The Pangsinenses play the Ozamiz Cotta on Friday and the Pagadian Explorers on Saturday.

The Bad Boy snubs his dad

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

DENNIS RODMAN'S father Philander, a longtime resident of Angeles City in Pampanga, almost stole the thunder from his famous and controversial son during the "Bad Boy Tour" match at the Araneta Coliseum on Labor Day.

Twice Philander tried to approach Dennis—before the game, and then just before the final buzzer—but on both occasions, his attempts were thwarted, causing much commotion.

From the looks of it, the visiting Rodman delegation had anticipated this kind of scenario. A phalanx of security men and Rodman's bodyguard were immediately at hand when Philander tried to make his move.

A lot of expletives were exchanged. The encounter provided so much excitement, perhaps even more than the game itself.

Somebody tried to get the older Rodman out of the Big Dome, but he brandished a ringside ticket which legitimized his presence in the venue. He stayed to watch the whole game.

* * *

From what I gathered, Philander had secured his ticket from a giant television network, which had gone out of its way to track him down in anticipation of a highly emotional human interest story.

Unfortunately, the projected reconciliation never happened. Months before Dennis arrived in Manila, he already warned his promoters not to entertain any attempt by his father to touch base with him. Dennis made it clear in no uncertain terms that he did not want to see his father who had abandoned him and his mother decades ago.

I'm not sure if the figure has been verified, but a colleague swore Dennis has a total of 26 siblings here in Manila.

* * *

Except for a few minor hitches, PBA marketing head Jack Ruby said the 2005-06 All-Star Weekend in Cagayan de Oro, was by far the best in 31 years.

"That's what oldtimers told me. Even Com (PBA commissioner Noli Eala) said the barometer for this event has been raised too high, it will be difficult to approximate, much less surpass, in the next edition. Carlos Singson of the NBA was also impressed," Jack texted a few hours after he alighted from the plane that flew the PBA delegation to Manila from Cagayan de Oro.

The Cagayan de Oro success had been the result of what he learned from the last NBA All-Stars in Houston, Texas, Jack said.

"There were many firsts, like the Acro-Dunkers, the PBA Sumo… Laoag certainly paled in comparison."

Jack said the masked AcroDunkers were stuntmen. Although they were high flyers, their shooting accuracy left much to be desired probably because they couldn't see well. The slits in their masks were too small.

Jack said sponsors like Extreme Magic Sing and Hope were very generous, both with cash and in kind. Indeed, I saw Astra's Henny Fabian giving out a unit to all the winners in the All-Stars and the two MVPs.

* * *

Mexican boxer Oscar Larios, known for his machine-gun jabs, must be a big fan of the late Fernando Poe Jr.

Listen to this. I'm told by boxing researches that Larios once unleashed 1,626 jabs in one round, making me wonder if this was mathematically possible.

The Mano-a-Mano fight between Larios and our own Manny Pacquiao is scheduled in July at the Araneta Coliseum.

* * *

HOOPVINE: Player agent Danny Espiritu said his client Mark Caguioa of Ginebra failed to make it to Cagayan de Oro because of a pulled tendon in the thigh and a minor sprain… In the celebrity exhibition game, ABC-5 cagers like Richard del Rosario, Jason Webb, Luigi Trillo and Mico Halili played only up to halftime because they had to prepare for the television coverage. Joy Lopez of the Commissioner's Office was the highest pointer (16), followed by Jack Ruby (12) who was proclaimed MVP (later that night in his dreams)… A colleague who attended the Mano-a-Mano press conference last week said Manny Pacquiao made a booboo when he accidentally uttered the "S" word which has become taboo, during the presscon. "Manny said he feared that opening the general admission area of the Big Dome free to the public might cause a Stampede," my colleague related.

Two PAF softball squads sweep doubleheaders

PITCHER Veronica Belleza of Bacolod bears down on a PUP batter yesterday at the start of the Philippine Open softball meet. Bacolod won, 7-0.

ROMY HOMILLADA

By Marc Anthony Reyes

GAMES TOMORROW
(*Rizal Memorial Stadium*)
Women
7 a.m.—BAC-Sr vs RTU
8:30 a.m.— Manila vs Laguna
10 a.m.—Bulacan vs BAC Jr
11:30 a.m.—BAC Sr vs UP Airforce
1 p.m.—RTU vs Air21
2:30 p.m.—Bulacan vs PUP
4 p.m.—BAC Sr vs Laguna
(*PUP Grounds*)
Men
7 a.m.—Pampanga vs Cebu City
8:30 a.m.—Davao vs PUP
10 a.m.—Bulacan vs Airforce
11:30 a.m.— Army vs RTU

THE MEN'S AND WOMEN'S teams of the Philippine Air Force yesterday soared to the early lead after sweeping their respective doubleheader assignments at the start of the Philippine Open softball championships.

Powered by the core of the Southeast Asian Games champions Blu Girls, the University of the Philippines-Airforce squad drubbed Laguna, 17-0, in the morning before thrashing Manila, 10-2, just after lunch at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

Over at the PUP grounds, their male counterparts blanked Cabuyao (13-0) and Polytechnic University of the Philippines (8-0).

The Bacolod Senior and Bacolod Junior teams also fashioned out impressive wins in their buildup for the World Series in the United States in August.

"More than anything else, this event should prepare three of our teams which are competing in the World Series," said organizer Boy Codiñera of the Amateur Softball Association-Philippines.

Bacolod Senior, which trounced Bulacan (11-1), will see action in Delaware, while Bacolod Junior, a 7-0 victor over Polytechnic University of the Philippines, will compete in Kirkland, Washington.

Manila, the third World Series-bound side which will be heading for Kalamazoo, Michigan, downed 2003 champion Rizal Technological University, 5-3, but proved no match for UP-Airfoce.

Also winning their inaugural matches were Air21 which crushed PUP, 11-2, in the women's bracket, and Cebu, which routed RTU, 9-2, in the men's division.

Syrel Ramos, who starred for the Blu Girls in the last SEAG, and Nelsa Delegente shone for UP-Airforce in their game over Manila.

Palaro rites: Noli to sub for GMA

NAGA CITY—VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO will represent President Macapagal-Arroyo as guest of honor during the opening of this year's Palarong Pambansa on May 7 at the Metro Naga Sports Complex here.

Naga City Mayor Jesse Robredo said the President begged off due to pressing concerns and endorsed the Vice President to take her place during the inaugural rites featuring athletes and officials from 17 participating regions.

Robredo said De Castro had already confirmed his attendance in the Palaro, which will be held in Camarines Sur for the third time. The mayor also thanked senators Francisco Pangilinan, Manny Villar and Serge Osmeña for giving financial support to the Palaro. *Juan Escandor Jr., Southern Luzon Bureau*

Mayol: Underdog's quiet quest for greatness

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

THERE COULD ONLY BE ONE VALID reason why undefeated Rodel Mayol has been pegged an awful underdog in his quest for the WBC minimumweight title in Tokyo on Saturday. Mayol is less known than defending champion Eagle Kyowa, a Thai fighter masquerading as a Japanese.

In fact, Mayol is not too famous here at home.

The routine question after it was announced that Mayol would finally get his long overdue crack at a world crown was: Who he?

Sportsbook.com, noted Nick Giongco of the Manila Bulletin, has pegged Mayol at +300 and Kyowa at -400.

Plainly put, a $100 bet on Mayol would pay off $300, while a $400 wager on Kyowa would give back only $100.

* * *

That discrepancy, naturally, has sent local fight experts salivating.

In fact, it won't be surprising if Manny Pacquiao would request his Cebu-based confidante, Rex Wakee Salud, to wager a wad of dollars on the quiet punching marvel from Mandaue City.

You see, going by the odds, it could appear that Kyowa, the Thai whose real name is Den Jalaphan, could flatten and overwhelm Mayol with the use of only one hand.

That's rather odd because, to those who have not heard of Mayol, the mandatory challenger happens to have carved out a more brilliant knockout record than his two famous peers, Brian Viloria and Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista.

* * *

OK, Mayol, Viloria and Bautista are all undefeated.

Viloria, reigning WBC light flyweight king, is 18-0 with 12 KOs (67 percent), Bautista is 19-0 with 14 KOs (74 percent).

Mayol? He owns the best knockout percentage among the three: 22-0 with 17 KOs (77 percent).

Actually, there had been happy glimpses of Mayol by local fans, but these came mainly in delayed televised bouts three to four years ago.

Dusky, strong and sharp, the quiet, marble-eyed slasher would dispose of assorted foes—Korean, Thai, Indon, Pinoy—to rise in world rankings, before being methodically avoided by higher rated boxers in the exacting 105-lb class.

Just like the colorful and widely more popular Boom Boom Bautista, Mayol is a product of the Tony Aldeguer Stable (ALA) in Cebu.

He was next taken in by American Terry Carter, who later ceded the budding national treasure to a Japanese fight manager.

* * *

So where was Mayol, what had he been doing while Boom Boom and Brian were clashing with the best in their division out in foreign rings?

Mayol, together with Malcolm Tuñacao, holed up in the Tokyo stable of Yasuo Matsuoka, a famous and respected Japanese advertising executive.

Mayol maintained his unblemished record, fighting brilliantly, away from the eyes of his countrymen, before erasing the final hump to the world title challenge in Mexico.

Again, that feat, which saw him stop Mexican Lorenzo Trejo in the eliminator in Cancun the week after Pacquiao stopped Erik Morales in Las Vegas, hardly created a ripple here at home.

Anyway, knowing Matsuoka, he would not mind the unfair billing his fighter has been getting.

In fact, Matsuoka, married to Gina, a gracious Filipina, also feels that Saturday's test could be the toughest in Mayol's brilliant career.

Kyowa, 15-1 with 5 KOs, is known to be durable, foxy and strong.

His only loss, reports Wakee Salud, came after he injured a shoulder in an earlier title defense. He later avenged that setback to regain his crown.

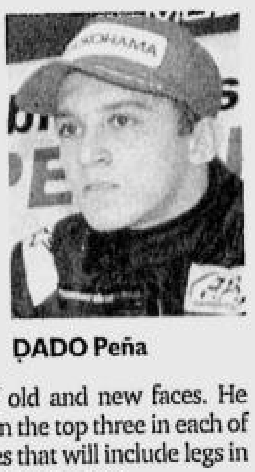
Now, let's hear it from international referee Bruce McTavish, who retains a store of the strengths and weaknesses of world-rated boxers underneath his puzzling hairdo.

"Mayol is bound to be even greater than Manny Pacquiao," McTavish assures.

Maybe it's no plain coincidence that Mayol would be going for the world crown (to be covered by Solar Sports) at the Korakuen Hall in Tokyo, venue of some of Gabriel Elorde's greatest fights.

Sy flashes hot form in initial drive at BRC

TYSON Sy



DADO Peña

FILIPINO RACING STAR TYSON SY SHOWED up in yesterday's PSA Forum with his right hand wrapped in black protective cast to heal a light sprain sustained while shooting hoops recently.

This, however, has not gotten in the way of Sy's determined drive to open his bid in this year's Asian Formula Three series on a hot note.

Only last Monday, he clocked the fastest lap time of one minute and 29 seconds flat while testing at the Batangas Racing Circuit. He expects to go faster once the new car he will drive is fine-tuned to perfection by team mechanics.

Clearly, Sy's enthusiasm has not waned a bit.

Sy's title bid last year was thwarted by a couple of accidents and some miscalculations.

Yesterday, he rated himself as "completely ready" against a mix of old and new faces. He said he intends to finish in the top three in each of this year's 18-round series that will include legs in Zhuhai, China, and Sentul, Indonesia.

"I've learned my lessons and I'm coming out a stronger and better driver," said Sy during yesterday's public sports program sponsored by Pagcor and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza at the main function room of the Pantalan Restaurant.

Sy pulled off a sweep of the two Indonesian races last year en route to fourth place overall.

The only driver who nearly matched Sy's lap time last Monday was fellow Filipino Dado Peña who clocked one minute, 29.1 seconds.

3-round AF3 kickoff races wide-open affair

A WIDE-OPEN RACE IS SEEN IN the 2006 Asian Formula 3 season, with Filipino drivers Tyson Sy and Dado Peña expected to figure prominently in the chase for the individual overall title.

Defending champion Ananda Mikola will be back to defend his crown, although the daring Indonesian may not be able to see action in all of the six legs comprising this year's series, including the inaugural three rounds to be held on May 6-7 at the Batangas Racing Circuit.

The same is true with Irishman John O' Hara, last year's runner-up, and 2004 champion Christian Jones of Australia, leaving Sy, Peña, the British pair of Dillon Battistini and James Winslow and the rest of the cast right on track to challenge for the championship.

"Tyson and Dado are just one of five to six drivers who can win this year," said AF3 Corp. chair Jose Eduardo Peña in yesterday's PSA Forum where the only Formula 3 series in Asia outside of Japan was formally launched.

Peña was joined in the forum by Sy, Battistini, Winslow, JP Tuason, 2003 champion Pepon Marave and female driver Gaby dela Merced.

Marave said Sy, barring any major mechanical breakdown, could score a breakthrough.

Nine teams will vie in the 18-leg series that will also visit China and Indonesia, and see the debut of karting champion Michelle Bumgarner.

SPORTS

Clippers end drought

Mavs sweep Grizzlies; Pistons near 2nd round

LOS ANGELES—THE LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS REACHED the second round of the National Basketball Association playoffs for the first time in three decades with a 101-83 victory over the Denver Nuggets on Monday.

Cuttino Mobley and Corey Maggette had 23 points each as the Clippers iced the first-round Western Conference series in five games. The sixth-seeded Clippers have made it out of the opening round for the first time since 1976, when the franchise was known as the Buffalo Braves.

Dallas followed the Clippers into the next round as Dirk Nowitzki scored 27 points and the Mavericks routed Memphis, 102-76, Monday, completing a sweep of the Grizzlies.

The Clippers had been a perennial laughingstock since the franchise moved to California in 1978. But behind young star Elton Brand and a core of veterans that includes Mobley and Sam Cassell, the ridiculed franchise's outlook has changed.

An eight-year veteran who is in his first year with the team, Mobley paced five players in double figures Monday as the Clippers closed out the disappointing and third-seeded Nuggets, who struggled to find offense throughout the series.

The Clippers displayed their maturity and a killer instinct, using a 16-3 run over the final 5:50 of the third quarter to open a 71-57 lead.

Maggette and Brand scored six points apiece in the burst that lasted into the fourth quarter as the crowd at Staples Center arena began an early celebration.

In Memphis, Josh Howard added 24 points and a game-high nine rebounds while Jerry Stackhouse contributed 19 points for the Mavericks, who became the first NBA team to reach the second round.

Spaniard Pau Gasol scored 25 points to lead the Grizzlies, who set an ignoble NBA record with their 12th consecutive playoff loss and became the first club ever swept by the Mavericks in a seven-game series.

"You want the extra rest. It's very important," Nowitzki said. "We came out aggressive and set the tone. We didn't want momentum to change. When you have a chance to end a series early you want to do it. You want the extra rest."

The Mavericks will have a minimum of five days to rest before a semifinal matchup against either eighth-seed Sacramento or top-seeded defending champion San Antonio, level at 2-2 in their series.

In Milwaukee, Chauncey Billups scored a game-high 34 points, including 16-of-16 from the free-throw line, as the top-seeded Pistons rebounded from an embarrassing Game Three loss to push the Bucks to the brink of elimination.

After cruising to comfortable wins in Games One and Two, Detroit watched the Bucks claim a decisive 124-104 victory.

"I thought we came out a little more focused," Billups told reporters. "We won those first two games handily at home and we kind of got away what we do and that's grinding it out, playing good defense and contesting every shot." *AFP, Reuters*

NBA on TV

SOLAR SPORTS—LA Lakers vs Phoenix (10:30 a.m. live, 5:30 p.m. tomorrow replay)

SPORTSPLUS—Chicago vs Miami (8 a.m. live, 7:30 p.m. replay); Sacramento vs San Antonio (9:30 p.m. delayed telecast, 7:30 p.m. tomorrow replay)

CASSELL
19
Clippers
50

HOW sweet it is to finally make the second round of the playoffs. Clipper guards Sam Cassell and Corey Magette celebrate that feat. AP

Hingis survives first clay return

WARSAW—FORMER WORLD NO. 1 Martina Hingis made a winning return in her first clay court match in four years here on Monday as she overcame a gallant challenge from Russia's Maria Kirilenko to set up a possible clash with Venus Williams at the J&S Cup in Warsaw.

The Swiss star claimed a tense and skillful two-hour battle, 7-5, 7-6 (7/1), despite her opponent once serving for the first set and twice serving for the second.

Hingis, who had not played a clay court match since losing to Venus Williams in Hamburg exactly four years ago, admitted she struggled to find her game after such a long absence.

"It's been a long time," said the former Roland Garros finalist.

"Hopefully I'll get into it, and I'm very happy to be through this first round.

Both players rallied strongly with the opening three games stretching to 14 minutes, and after an early break each way it was Kirilenko who hit a backhand winner to earn a 5-4 lead ,and serve for the set.

But Hingis survived, breaking for 5-5 with a forehand that landed just long and was the subject of a challenge by the Russian.

Kirilenko then let another chance slip away when she led 40-0 and held three break points in the next game, but Hingis won the next five points to hold, and then took the set on her fifth set point when Kirilenko netted a double-handed backhand.

Kirilenko responded by taking an early break in the second set, but rain brought a lengthy delay as she led 2-1. After play resumed Hingis tied things up at 4-4, only for the next four games to also go against serve as Kirilenko broke to lead 5-4 and 6-5.

Hingis acknowledged the tactical skills that Kirilenko had shown. *AFP*

Fenway Park jeers and cheers Damon

DAMON AFP

BOSTON—THE BOSTON Red Sox ruined Johnny Damon's return to Fenway Park as a New York Yankee with an emphatic 7-3 victory inspired by scores from Mark Loretta and David Ortiz in American League action Monday.

Loretta broke a 5-for-42 slump by singling home pinch-runner Willie Harris to help the Red Sox take a 4-3 lead before Ortiz followed with a three-run home run in the eighth inning to make it a miserable return for Damon, who joined the Yankees from the Sox as a free agent during the offseason.

He turned some of the angry fans around by doffing his batting helmet to the crowd, but had dollar bills tossed at him as he went into the outfield. He went 0-for-4 the rest of the night.

"Regardless of the reaction, I feel like a lot of fans wanted to see it," Damon said of his salute, which came while former teammates cheered from the top step of the Boston dugout.

"I heard more cheers than jeers so I was going to do it regardless. They don't boo bad players. They boo players who can make a difference."

Yankee manager Joe Torre said he was disappointed with the reaction of the fans.

"I guess we should feel proud. Evidently, wearing a Yankee uniform overrides winning a World Series and busting your tail for four years. "Without Johnny here, they may have been working on 89 or 90 years (without winning a World Series)."

With one out in the Boston eighth, Alex Cora walked and Harris ran for him.

Loser Aaron Small (0-1), returning from the disabled list to pitch for the first time this season, then hit Kevin Youkilis with a pitch. *Reuters*

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Editor Emmie G. Velarde

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Mission Impossible III

Stars Tom Cruise, Ving Rhames, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Billy Crudup, Laurence Fishburne

Directed by J.J. Abrams

The third installment of the popular franchise finds super-spy Ethan Hunt (Cruise) retired and conducting classes for aspiring agents. He is forced out of retirement, however, to rescue a valuable colleague. This time, he is up against a sadistic madman (played by this year's Oscar Best Actor Hoffman). Directed by the debuting Adams (better known as creator of TV hits "Alias" and "Lost"), the slugfest has lots of "high concept stunts… [and] jam-packed action." Stefan Halley of Pop Syndicate comments, "The stunts… are pretty awesome, even if they are a bit goofy at times. There's even one scene straight out of a 'Road Runner' cartoon." Emanuel Levy of emanuellevy.com calls it "an enjoyable retro rollercoaster … as reenergized by Abrams, [the film] shows that there is still blood and sweat to be squeezed out of the franchise, [although] it is threatened by the post-modern coolness of Matt Damon's 'Bourne Supremacy' series."

Aquamarine

Stars Emma Roberts, Joanna "JoJo" Levesque, Sara Paxton, Jake McDorman

Directed by Elizabeth Allen

Think "Little Mermaid" and "Splash" for the 'tween set. A feisty mermaid (Paxton) is washed ashore and befriends two teeners (Roberts and Levesque). The girls help their new pal win a hunky lifeguard's heart and, in return, she fulfills their most ardent wish. Michael Rechtshaffen of the Hollywood Reporter describes it as "a bright and breezy fantasy romantic comedy that coasts along on its charming performances and light comedic touch." Other reviewers are ambivalent at best. Asserts Nancy Churnin of Dallas Morning News: "[The] direction doesn't exactly pop with pizzazz. The slow set-up is fidget-inducing, but she creates lovely moments." Gene Seymour of Newsday complains: "The whole movie moves in a gawky, unsteady gait, subverting its sincere desire to please with its fumbling tone and faulty plot mechanics." Kit Bowen of Hollywood.com thinks "it's just as sweet as gummy worm bait." The sweetness factor is courtesy of lead star Emma who's the niece of Julia Roberts.

Guinness 'localized'

By Marinel R. Cruz

LOCAL GROUPS OR INDIVIDuals who have landed in the Guinness Book of World Records now have a chance to secure spots in its TV show.

According to Benjie Paras, host of the local edition of the "Ultimate Guinness World Records" on ABC 5, the weekly program is preparing a "Pinoy Guinness" segment.

"The segment will feature Pinoys who ate the most number of nails or insects, for instance, or the group who baked the largest strawberry cake," Benjie told INQUIRER Entertainment on Monday.

RP also holds the record for the world's largest aerobics demonstration/class, most number of couples kissing simultaneously, longest snake, longest horns, smallest freshwater fish, shortest adult actor in a leading role, most widespread computer virus, largest papal crowd and largest shoes.

GUINNESS/ A2-2

BENJIE Paras, host

Loneliness, alienation did it

By Nini Valera

LONELINESS AND ALIENATION were the two most compelling reasons that Aldred Gatchalian decided to take a voluntary leave from "Pinoy Big Brother Teen Edition" on Saturday.

It was exactly a week after he entered "Kuya's" house with 11 other participants.

A new housemate, Joaquin Bustamante Mendoza, 17, replaced Aldred on Monday.

Aldred's mother, Marian, was waiting outside when he came out. Teary-eyed, Marian embraced Aldred and said she was very proud of him.

The crowd that had gathered in front of the house cheered the teen.

Aldred finished high school with honors from St. Therese de Avila School in Parañaque only last March. Coming from a poor family, he earlier confessed that he could not relate to the more "*sosyal*" housemates.

"PBB" had not allowed exit interviews for Aldred.

LONELINESS/ A2-2

ALDRED Gatchalian

News war heats up

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

"TV PATROL WORLD" IS BACK ON TRACK, having recovered from a two-year slump, according to ABS-CBN news executives Maria Ressa, senior vice president and head of News and Current Affairs, and Luchi Cruz-Valdes, vice president and head of Current Affairs.

ABS-CBN's primetime news show has been posting good ratings over rival GMA 7's "24 Oras," said Valdes, who was vacationing in Bangkok at the time of the phone interview with INQUIRER Entertainment. "In the past three weeks, we've been posting higher ratings in three out of five days in Metro Manila," she stressed.

She cited surveys conducted by AGB-Nielsen, measured in three areas—Metro Manila, Mega Manila and Suburbs. Mega Manila consists of respondents in Metro Manila (70 percent) and the Suburbs (30 percent).

Valdes recounted: "The decline in 'TV Patrol' ratings started in 2004. All throughout 2005, the best we could get was a parity—meaning, we would be behind by one point. June last year, things started to pick up."

GMA 7 protests

That was the time that Ressa took over as head of the news team, Valdes noted. "In a month, we'd win once in Metro. Then, twice in a month. Later, twice in a week. Now, we win thrice in a week in Metro. If you get the average, we're no. 1 in Metro."

Ressa recalled that in the last quarter of 2005, "'TV Patrol' was doing well… and then Ultra happened."

She was referring to the stampede that killed 71 audience members of the ABS-CBN noontime show "Wowowee," which was celebrating its first anniversary at the PhilSports Arena (formerly Ultra) last Feb. 4.

Two months after the tragedy, "'TV Patrol' was back on track," said Ressa.

Butch Raquel, head of GMA 7's Corporate Communications, disputed this. Via SMS, he sent INQUIRER "figures that [show] we are leading… for

NEWS WAR/ A2-2

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Guinness 'localized'

From page A2-1

"Guinness" and "Ripley's Believe It Or Not" are foreign feature programs on ABC 5 that have been "localized in order to infuse newness in TV viewing," according to senior vice president for Corporate Affairs Terra Daffon.

ABC 5 acquired the exclusive rights to air "Guinness" and "Ripley's" on free TV two years ago from Total Sports Co., and Sony Pictures, respectively.

"Foreign shows translated into Filipino rate well," Daffon pointed out, "because they connect better with the viewing public." Not all foreign suppliers allow their shows to be localized, she said.

Part of "localizing" a show is picking a local talent as host. Raymond Bagatsing is the host of the local edition of "Ripley's."

"'Ripley's' is doing quite well. Raymond adds star value to the show, plus drama and surprise," Daffon stressed. "Benjie has a unique brand of humor."

Raymond and Benjie deliver in Filipino all their adlibs and comments on featured vignettes.

Localizing the two shows also required several portions to be narrated in Filipino, said Daffon.

"The VOs (voice over) are also done by the hosts," Benjie said.

Raymond added: "Dubbing is quite taxing."

Copies of "Ripley's" and "Guinness" are sent to a local production company that specializes in translation and dubbing—similar to what is being done to imported *telenovelas*, said Daffon.

Localizing shows is a growing trend in the country, Daffon observed. "We foresee that this will continue for some time."

In 1997, ABC localized "That's Incredible," which showcases amazing feats of humans and animals, and called it "Dobol Inkredibol." The program was hosted by Janno Gibbs.

BAGATSING: "Dubbing is quite taxing."

News war heats up

From page A2-1

the period cited."

The message read that from April 1-26, from 6 a.m. to 12 midnight, GMA was leading over ABS CBN—in Mega Manila with 17.2 percent vs 12.2 percent; in Metro Manila with 15.8 percent vs 13.5 percent; and in the Suburbs with 19.9 percent vs 9.8 percent.

Same source

Raquel stressed that these figures were also from AGB-Neilsen.

Ressa in turn e-mailed figures that showed "TV Patrol" besting "24 Oras" in Metro on at least three nights in April (19-21).

Ressa cautioned that ratings are "simply a tool that tells us what viewers want."

"My personal preference is not to focus on these figures," she said. "If we keep doing the right thing, the ratings will follow. While we're... winning in Metro, we still have a long way to go in Mega Manila."

In a nutshell, she observed that viewers want "news that is relevant to their lives... In the West, news viewership has gone down; but in the Philippines, it has gone up. We're bucking global trends."

Voluntary exit ...

From page A2-1

Director Lauren Dyogi explained that the show's resident psychologist, Dr. Randy Dellosa, had advised against public appearances for the teen.

In one episode, Aldred told Big Brother that he had been offended during the "Unguy-Unguyan" card game, where one of the housemates referred to him as "*masamang itsura sa* boys (the worst-looking among the boys)."

Actually, Big Brother explained to Aldred, what Kim said was "*masamang itsura kasi hindi ngumingiti* (he looks bad because he doesn't smile)."

Dyogi told INQUIRER Entertainment that Aldred had often asked to talk to his mother.

"But [that] was against the rules," Dyogi said. "I guess he must have felt really lonely."

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GISELLE Sanchez
Dennis Rodman

I made Dennis Rodman smile —and like me

By Giselle Sanchez
Contributor

FIRST PERSON

DENNIS RODMAN LIVED UP TO HIS "bad boy" image while in the Philippines. He looked intimidating. He hardly smiled at his fans. He always seemed distant.

This was exactly the person that I met. But... let's not get ahead of the story.

I met the handsome Craig Balkam, Rodman's schedule manager and personal bodyguard, through my lawyer from Hollywood, Jeoff Tollan. Craig runs one of the most powerful security agencies in Hollywood, whose clients include Elizabeth Taylor, Barbara Streisand and Paris Hilton.

Craig and Jeoff asked me to dinner at Havana in Greenbelt 3. I was very excited to meet the celebrated "bad boy."

Craig was generous with his introduction: "Dennis, this is Giselle Sanchez. She is a very famous comedienne here in the Philippines."

No pictures

From the way Dennis looked at me, I could tell what he was thinking: "So what? I'm Dennis Rodman!" I quickly erased the thought bubble and asked for a snapshot with him. What I got was a stern, "Sorry, no pictures."

I sulked at the table where I was seated with 10 beautiful girls, including Keanna Reeves. "Oh my goodness," I thought, "I'm a Rodman groupie!" I texted my husband and described the scenario. His reply: "Hahaha! Don't forget what I told you."

I had told my husband earlier about the dinner. He said, laughing (right arm raised, right elbow held with left hand), "Beware, he's this big."

When our dinner group moved to Prince of Jaipur, I told another "groupie" my husband's joke, complete with arm motion. Apparently, Dennis was watching. He called out, "Hey!" (He had forgotten my name.) When I turned, he raised his right arm and, with his left hand, held his right armpit. Huh?

No wonder

A while later, Dennis and I were talking; I was even making him laugh. His big thick lips stretched whenever he smiled. With that lower lip ring, no wonder he hardly smiled. The studs on his nostrils jiggled whenever he laughed. No wonder he hardly laughed! He actually looked scarier when he did.

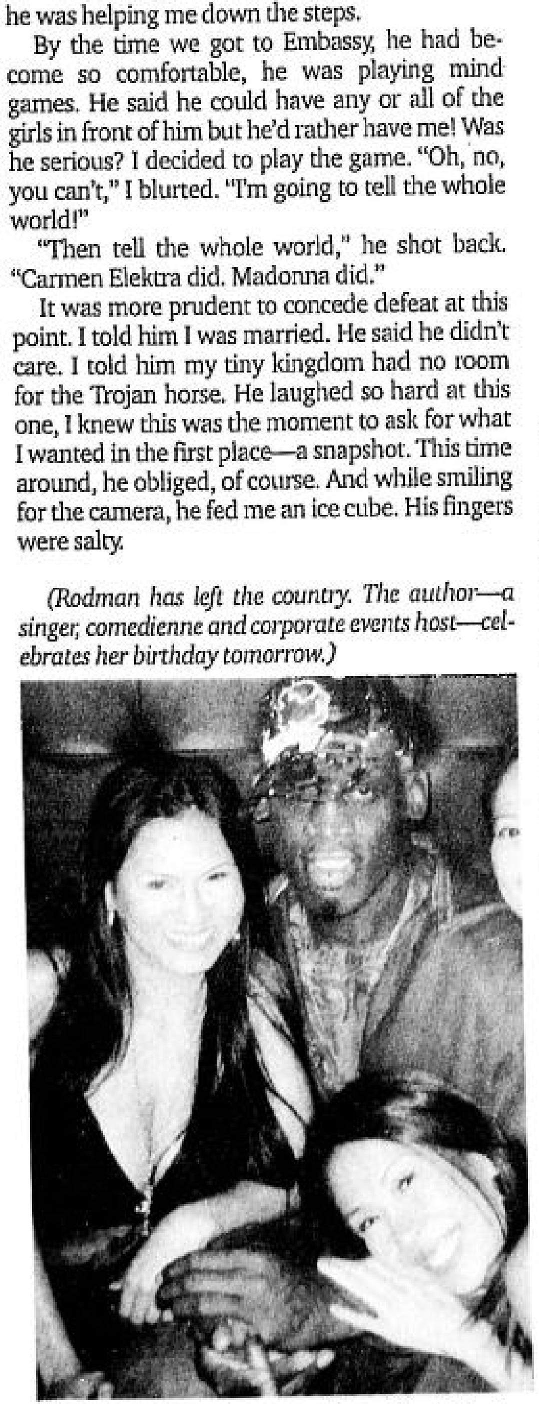
As we went down the stairs leaving Jaipur, he assisted me. The teenagers around were clearly in awe at the sight of him. I was in awe because he was helping me down the steps.

By the time we got to Embassy, he had become so comfortable, he was playing mind games. He said he could have any or all of the girls in front of him but he'd rather have me! Was he serious? I decided to play the game. "Oh, no, you can't," I blurted. "I'm going to tell the whole world!"

"Then tell the whole world," he shot back. "Carmen Elektra did. Madonna did."

It was more prudent to concede defeat at this point. I told him I was married. He said he didn't care. I told him my tiny kingdom had no room for the Trojan horse. He laughed so hard at this one, I knew this was the moment to ask for what I wanted in the first place—a snapshot. This time around, he obliged, of course. And while smiling for the camera, he fed me an ice cube. His fingers were salty.

(Rodman has left the country. The author—a singer, comedienne and corporate events host—celebrates her birthday tomorrow.)



FROM left, Keanna Reeves, Dennis and Giselle

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MTRCB PG-13
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3 THE WILD
MTRCB. GP
4 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE III
MTRCB PG-13
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GP
CINEMA 5 SENTINEL
10.30, 12.50, 3.10, 5.30, 7.50, 10.10
PG13
TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.

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MAY 5 & 6, 2006 | SHOW GIRLS | 9.00PM
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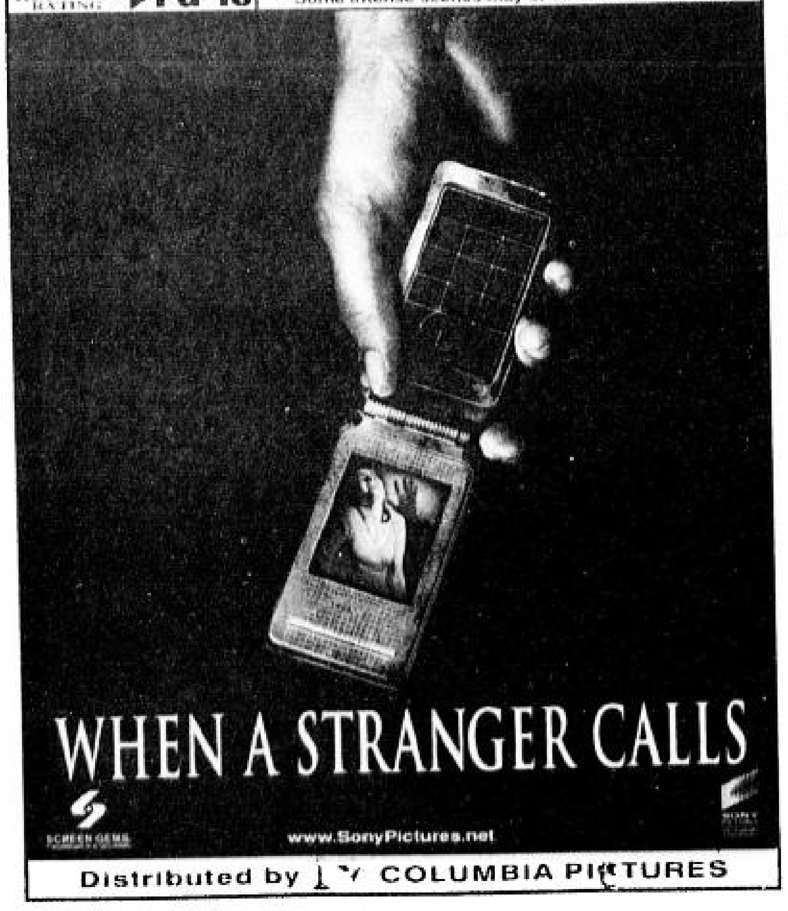

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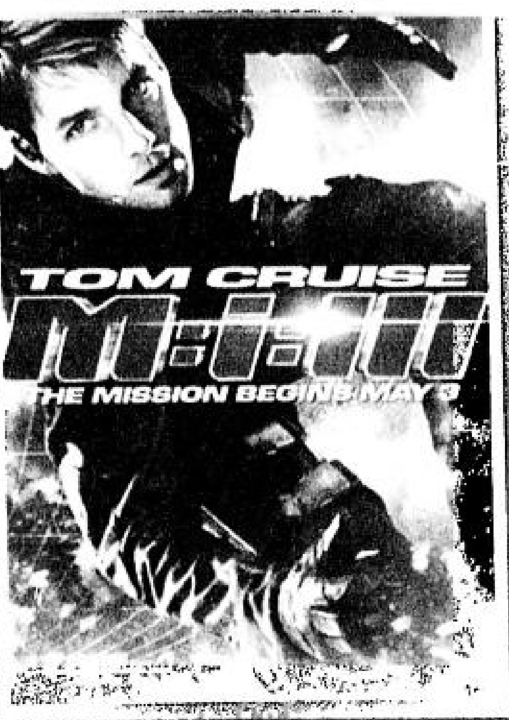

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METRO MANILA

THE PODIUM
CINEMA 1
M:I:III
CINEMA 2
M:I:III

SM MEGACINEMA
THE WILD
SENTINEL
M:I:III
SILENT HILL
AQUAMARINE
AMERICA
SUBMERGED
WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
M:I:III
M:I:III
D LUCKY ONES
PAMAHIIN

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
M:I:III
THE WILD
SILENT HILL
M:I:III
PAMAHIIN
D LUCKY ONES
AQUAMARINE
SENTINEL

SM CITY DASMARINAS
M:I:III
AMERICA
PAMAHIIN
M:I:III

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
SUBMERGED
SENTINEL
AMERICA
M:I:III
PAMAHIIN
SILENT HILL
M:I:III
THE WILD
D LUCKY ONES
EIGHT BELOW
ICE AGE 2
M:I:III

SM CITY STA. MESA
M:I:III
AQUAMARINE
SILENT HILL
SENTINEL
M:I:III
D LUCKY ONES
WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
AMERICA
THE WILD
PAMAHIIN

SM CITY BICUTAN
SENTINEL
THE WILD
SILENT HILL
M:I:III

SM CITY SAN LAZARO
THE WILD
M:I:III
M:I:III
SILENT HILL
D LUCKY ONES
PAMAHIIN

SM CITY MANILA
AQUAMARINE
AMERICA
SUBMERGED
M:I:III
THE WILD
M:I:III
PAMAHIIN
SENTINEL
D LUCKY ONES
TRISTAN & ISOLDE
WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
SILENT HILL

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
M:I:III
SELENT HILL
M:I:III
M:I:III
SENTINEL
PAMAHIIN
THE WILD
WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
D LUCKY ONES

SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA
M:I:III
M:I:III
SILENT HILL
THE WILD

SM CITY SUCAT
PAMAHIIN
M:I:III
SENTINEL
SILENT HILL

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Two best friends has found another frienda mermaid, that is. Only true love can make her stand with her own feet forever.
AQUAMARINE
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We Salute The Military
With A Preview of Beauties
Witness the story of Ms. Faye Almazan in fulfilling her own American Dream, with Mr. Eric Estrada in a Starring role
USA

LUZON

SM CITY BAGUIO
M:I:III
THE WILD
JUST FRIENDS
M:I:III

SM CITY MARILAO
M:I:III
AMERICA
M:I:III
SHE'S THE MAN

SM CITY BATANGAS
THE WILD
M:I:III
D LUCKY ONES
M:I:III

SM CITY BACOOR
AMERICA
PAMAHIIN
M:I:III
SILENT
THE WILD
M:I:III
D LUCKY ONES
SUBMERGED

SM CITY STA. ROSA
AMERICA
SENTINEL
PAMAHIIN
M:I:III

SM CITY PAMPANGA
M:I:III
M:I:III
THE WILD
D LUCKY ONES
CHINESE TALL STORY
PAMAHIIN

SM CITY LUCENA
M:I:III
WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
M:I:III
EIGHT BELOW

SM CITY MOLINO
M:I:III
PAMAHIIN
D LUCKY ONES
M:I:III

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
M:I:III
M:I:III
SENTINEL
NORTH COUNTR
THE DARK
CHINESE TALL STORY
D LUCKY ONES
M:I:III

SM CITY ILOILO
D LUCKY ONES
M:I:III
M:I:III
SILENT HILL
THE WILD
GRANDMA'S BOY
RESERVED
CHINESE TALL STORY

SM CITY DAVAO
M:I:III
D LUCKY ONES
SENTINEL
THE WILD
M:I:III
M:I:III

SM CITY CAGAYAN
M:I:III
D LUCKY ONES
GRANDMA'S BOY
M:I:III

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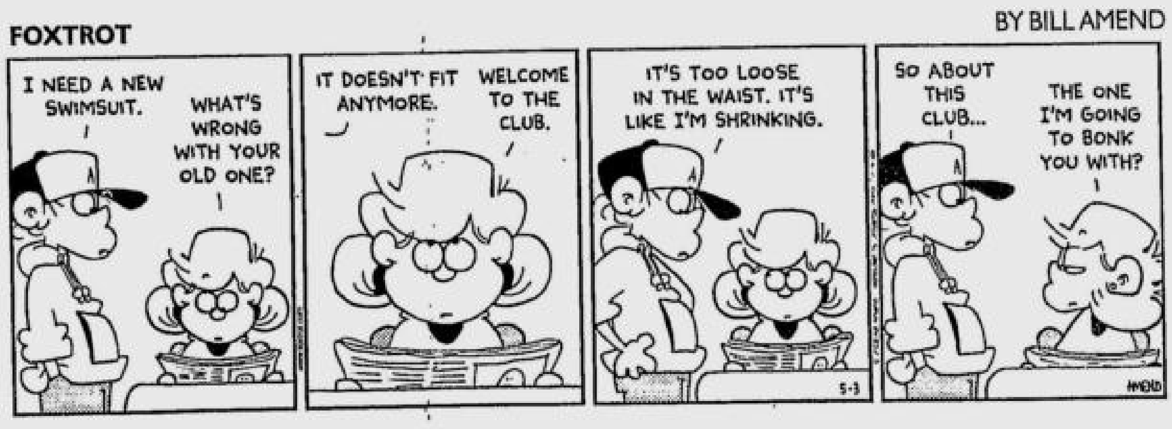
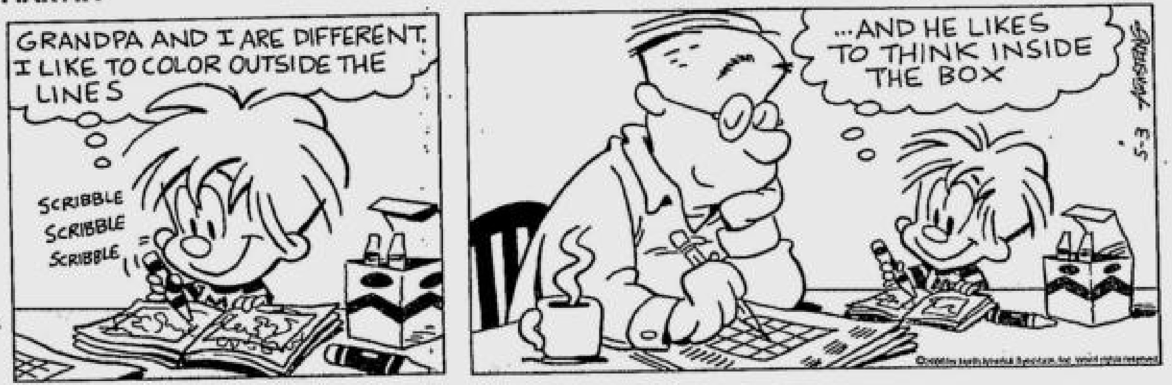
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


I NEED A NEW SWIMSUIT.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR OLD ONE?
IT DOESN'T FIT ANYMORE.
WELCOME TO THE CLUB.
IT'S TOO LOOSE IN THE WAIST. IT'S LIKE I'M SHRINKING.
SO ABOUT THIS CLUB...
THE ONE I'M GOING TO BONK YOU WITH?
5-3
AMEND

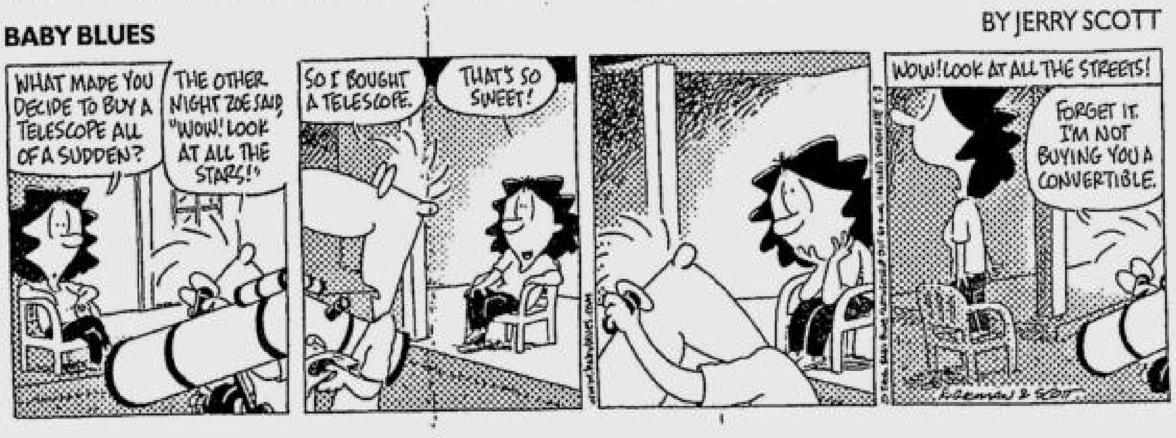
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


GRANDPA AND I ARE DIFFERENT. I LIKE TO COLOR OUTSIDE THE LINES
SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE
...AND HE LIKES TO THINK INSIDE THE BOX
ARMSTRONG 5-3

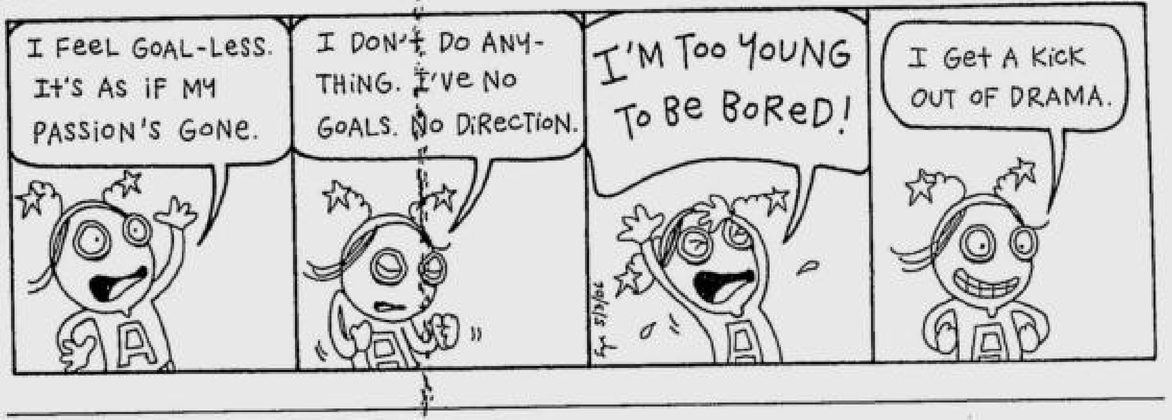
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO BUY A TELESCOPE ALL OF A SUDDEN?
THE OTHER NIGHT ZOE SAID "WOW! LOOK AT ALL THE STARS!"
SO I BOUGHT A TELESCOPE.
THAT'S SO SWEET!
WOW! LOOK AT ALL THE STREETS!
FORGET IT. I'M NOT BUYING YOU A CONVERTIBLE.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I FEEL GOAL-LESS. IT'S AS IF MY PASSION'S GONE.
I DON'T DO ANYTHING. I'VE NO GOALS. NO DIRECTION.
I'M TOO YOUNG TO BE BORED!
I GET A KICK OUT OF DRAMA.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Not only are you hardworking, you put joy into whatever you do. This inspires others. You're friendly, clever and charming. Nevertheless, you need time alone. You appreciate the arts—music, drama and nature. At 18, your curiosity about life becomes enlivened. At 48, your focus shifts to home and family. Expect increased solitude this year to ponder something important.

Birthdate of: Pete Seeger, activist/folksinger; Doug Henning, magician; James Brown, soul artist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): It's easy to go overboard when spending money today. If like most of us, you count your cash—then guard your impulses.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You might have to work hard to be detached or objective today. It's too easy to stick to your point of view and close your ears.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Don't fall for crocodile tears today. You might be sympathetic about something that really doesn't deserve this much attention.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Enjoy the company of others today. People are friendly, and they want to have a good time. There's nothing wrong with this. Jump on board if you like.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Although Leo is a royal sign, it's not cool to be too caught up in yourself. Remember that at the end of the game, the King and the Pawn go back in the same box.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Political or religious arguments might get taken to the extreme today. People might exaggerate things. Be careful about this. Pull in your reins a little.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You might be tempted to be overly generous when sharing something today, especially something that you don't own. (Oops.) People are very openhanded today. And so are you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Although you want to get along with a partner today, don't give away the farm. Other people should be reasonable, and so should you. You might have to draw a line in the sand.

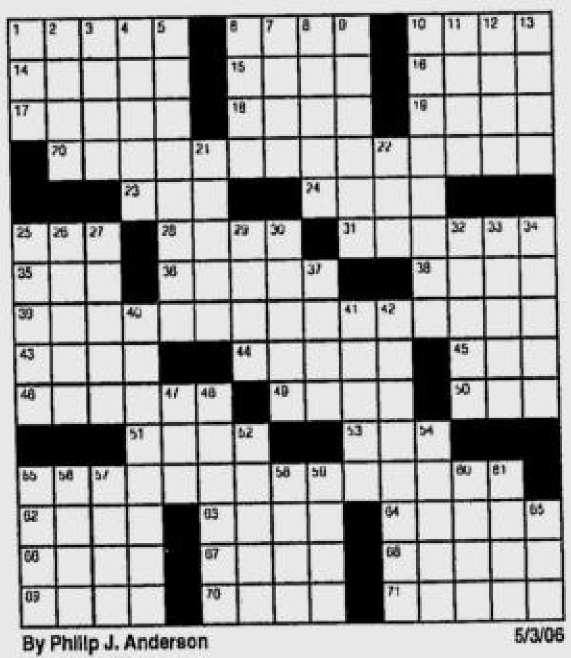
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You like to do things in a big way. (It's the ever-present optimist in you.) Be careful about what you agree to at work. Don't take on more than you can handle.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Gamblers beware! Ditto for shoppers and people who are partying. It's very tempting to go overboard today or to think that something looks better than it really is. Caution!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): This is a perfect day to relax at home. You want to eat junk food and indulge yourself. If you can get away with this, great!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You're enthusiastic about practically everything today. Be careful you don't drive too fast. And try to be prudent in your shopping. If negotiations look too good to be true, they are.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

5/3/06

ACROSS
1 Motion measure
6 Necklace fastener
10 Ostentatious display
14 Fashionably nostalgic
15 Actor Morales
16 Sixth Hebrew month
17 Street talk
18 Occupy completely
19 Mezzo-soprano Stevens
20 High daydreams?
23 Shoebox letters
24 Geek's pal
25 Quarterback Marino
28 Signaled the butler
31 Corporate shark
35 News org.
36 Tinkers to __ to Chance
38 Ward of "The Fugitive"
39 High homes?
43 Relative diagram
44 Nixon's Agnew
45 Half a fly?
46 Wading birds
49 Paris summers
50 That girl
51 Agatha's contemporary
53 Appropriate
55 High hopes
62 Colorful fish
63 Clamorous
64 Ensnares
66 __ Alto, CA
67 Bologna eight
68 Bandleader Shaw
69 Verve
70 "Subway Series" team
71 Sierra __

DOWN
1 Yrbk. section
2 Ill-gotten gains
3 List ender
4 "Cheers" bartender
5 Amateurish verse
6 Try out for weight
7 With defects and all
8 Beauty spot?
9 Swipe
10 Utopia
11 Host of Valhalla
12 Fem.'s opp.
13 Quarry
21 __ ho!
22 Monk's title
25 Enclosed channels
26 Not together
27 First generation Japanese-American
29 Scottish headland
30 Complain
32 "__ in Venice"
33 Beethoven dedicatee
34 More scarce
37 Brief bad mood
40 Fundraising broadcast
41 Pick up the tab
42 Medical facility
47 Test out
48 Ski race
52 Overact
54 Braves catcher of the '60s
55 Gentle pace
56 Iridescent gem
57 FDR's pooch
58 Ram
59 Marriage vows
60 W. def. grp.
61 Create yarn
65 What'd I tell ya?

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

S	H	O	P		T	S	A	R		G	A	N	G	S
L	A	V	A		E	T	C	H		O	P	E	R	A
U	L	A	N		N	A	M	E		S	T	I	E	S
G	O	L	D	E	N	Y	E	A	R	S		G	A	S
			A	L	I	A	S		E	I	G	H	T	Y
Z	A	G		E	S	T		P	A	P	A			
I	S	A	A	C		H	U	R	L		M	I	F	F
N	I	G	H	T	T	O	R	E	M	E	M	B	E	R
C	A	S	E		A	M	I	S		L	A	I	T	Y
			A	B	B	F		S	P	A		S	E	E
S	T	U	D	I	O		A	R	E	N	A			
W	O	N		G	O	O	D	O	L	D	D	A	Y	S
A	T	I	L	T		G	A	O	L		A	R	E	A
P	A	T	I	O		L	I	M	E		P	I	L	L
S	L	E	E	P		E	R	S	T		T	A	P	E

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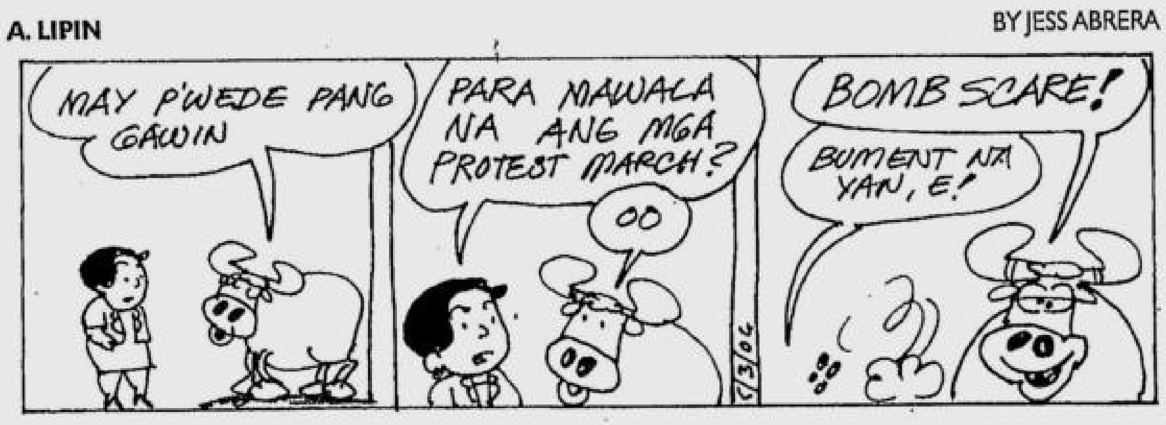
5/3/06

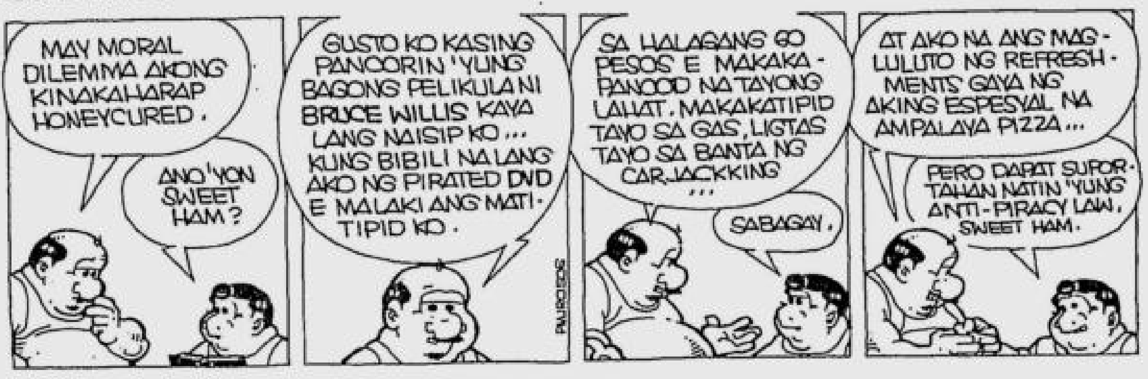
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


MAY P'WEDE PANG GAWIN
PARA MAWALA NA ANG MGA PROTEST MARCH?
OO
5/3/06
BOMB SCARE!
BUMENT NA YAN, E!

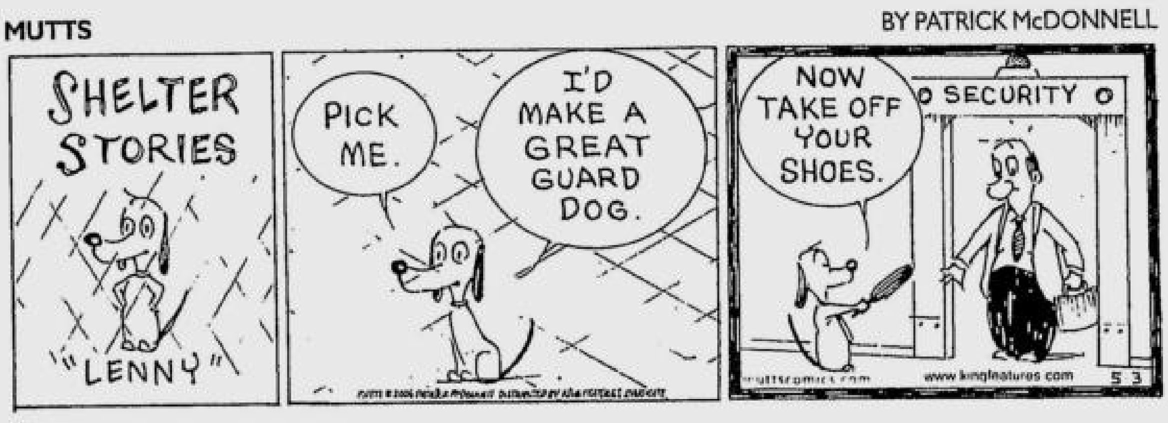
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


MAY MORAL DILEMMA AKONG KINAKAHARAP HONEYCURED.
ANO'YON SWEET HAM?
GUSTO KO KASING PANOORIN 'YUNG BAGONG PELIKULA NI BRUCE WILLIS KAYA LANG NAISIP KO... KUNG BIBILI NA LANG AKO NG PIRATED DVD E MALAKI ANG MATI-TIPID KO.
SA HALAGANG 60 PESOS E MAKAKA-PANOOD NA TAYONG LAHAT. MAKAKATIPID TAYO SA GAS, LIGTAS TAYO SA BANTA NG CARJACKKING ...
SABAGAY.
AT AKO NA ANG MAG-LULUTO NG REFRESH-MENTS GAYA NG AKING ESPESYAL NA AMPALAYA PIZZA...
PERO DAPAT SUPOR-TAHAN NATIN 'YUNG ANTI-PIRACY LAW, SWEET HAM.

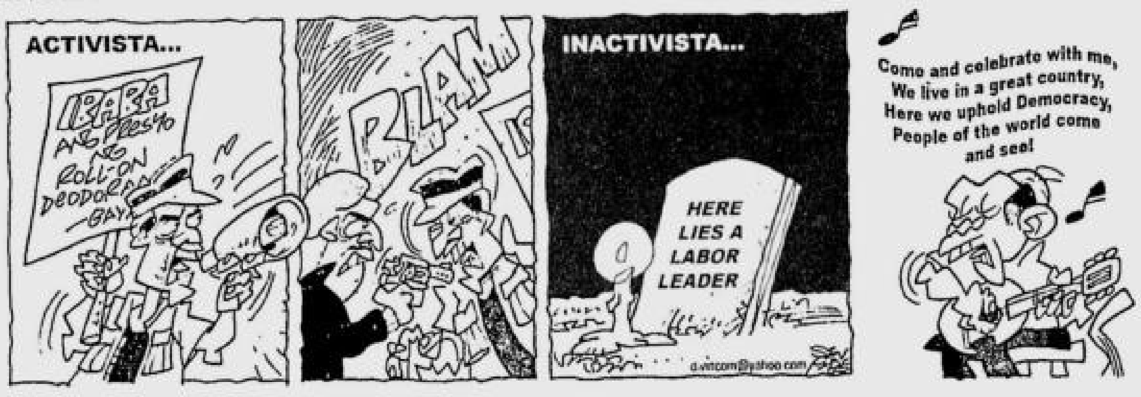
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SHELTER STORIES
"LENNY"
PICK ME.
I'D MAKE A GREAT GUARD DOG.
NOW TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES.
SECURITY
muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com
5 3

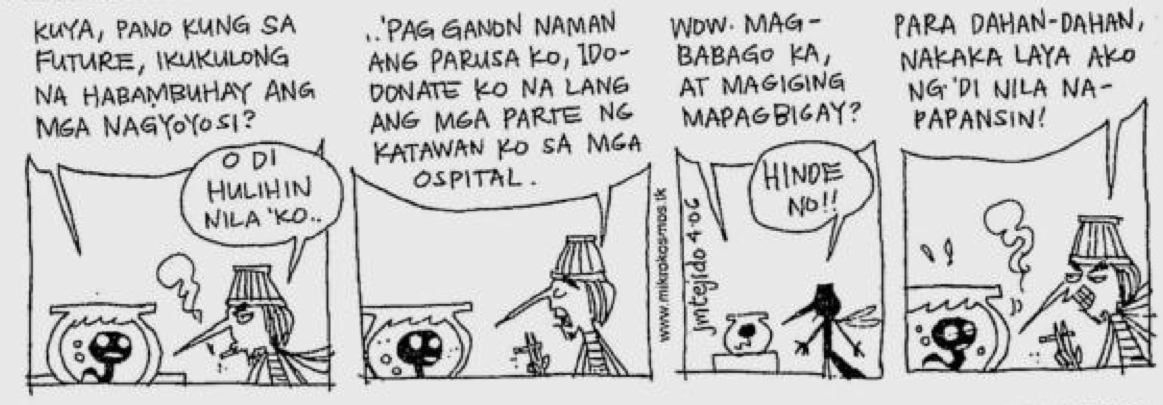
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ACTIVISTA...
IBASURA ANG PRESYO NG ROLL-ON DEODORANT
BLAM
INACTIVISTA...
HERE LIES A LABOR LEADER
Come and celebrate with me, We live in a great country, Here we uphold Democracy, People of the world come and see!

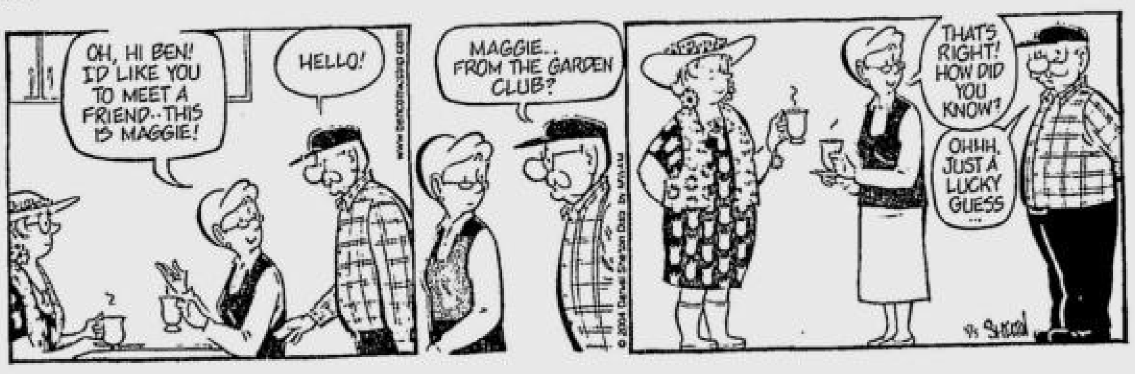
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


KUYA, PANO KUNG SA FUTURE, IKUKULONG NA HABAMBUHAY ANG MGA NAGYOYOSI?
O DI HULIHIN NILA 'KO..
..'PAG GANON NAMAN ANG PARUSA KO, IDO-DONATE KO NA LANG ANG MGA PARTE NG KATAWAN KO SA MGA OSPITAL.
www.mikrokosmos.tk
jmtejido 4.06
WOW. MAG-BABAGO KA, AT MAGIGING MAPAGBIGAY?
HINDE NO!!
PARA DAHAN-DAHAN, NAKAKA LAYA AKO NG 'DI NILA NA-PAPANSIN!

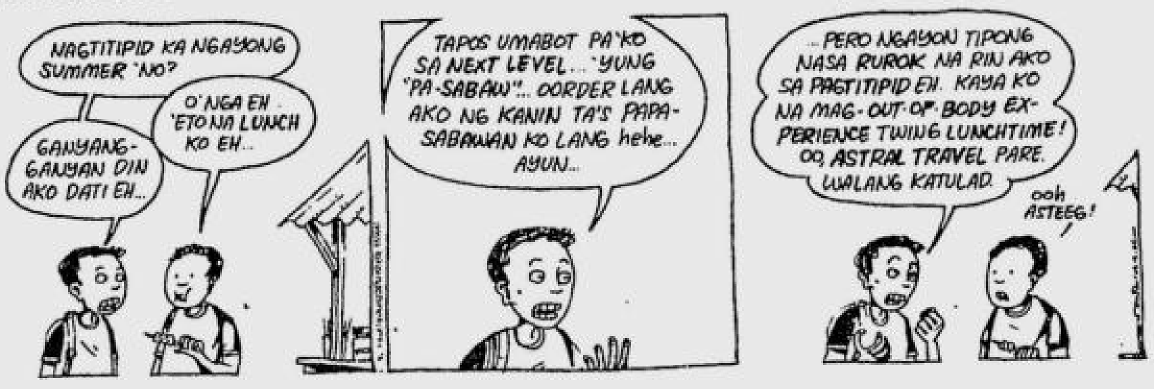
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


OH, HI BEN! I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET A FRIEND.. THIS IS MAGGIE!
HELLO!
MAGGIE.. FROM THE GARDEN CLUB?
THAT'S RIGHT! HOW DID YOU KNOW?
OHHH, JUST A LUCKY GUESS ...

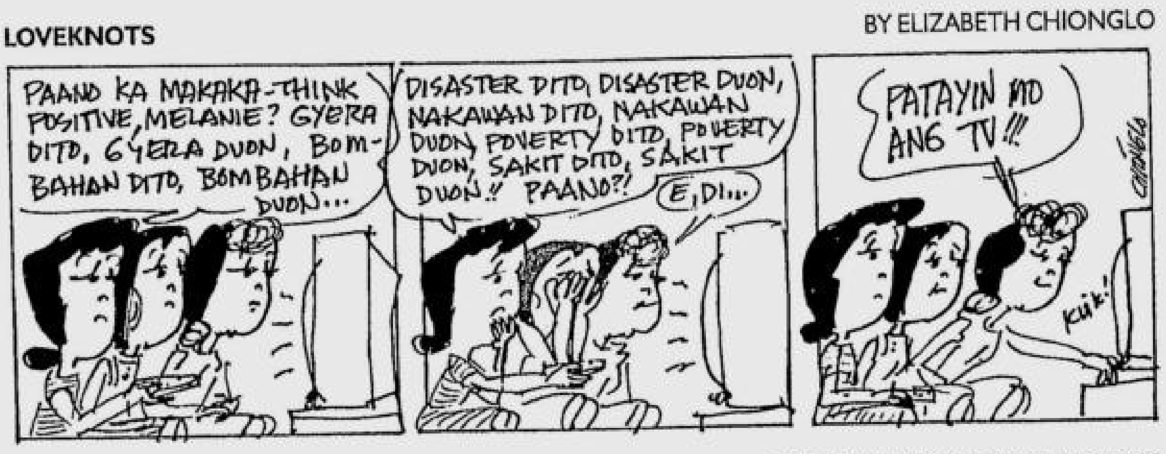
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


NAGTITIPID KA NGAYONG SUMMER 'NO?
GANYANG-GANYAN DIN AKO DATI EH...
O'NGA EH. 'ETO NA LUNCH KO EH...
TAPOS UMABOT PA'KO SA NEXT LEVEL... 'YUNG 'PA-SABAW'... OORDER LANG AKO NG KANIN TA'S PAPA-SABAWAN KO LANG hehe... AYUN..
..PERO NGAYON TIPONG NASA RUROK NA RIN AKO SA PAGTITIPID EH. KAYA KO NA MAG-OUT-OF-BODY EX-PERIENCE TUWING LUNCHTIME! OO, ASTRAL TRAVEL PARE. WALANG KATULAD.
ooh ASTEEG!

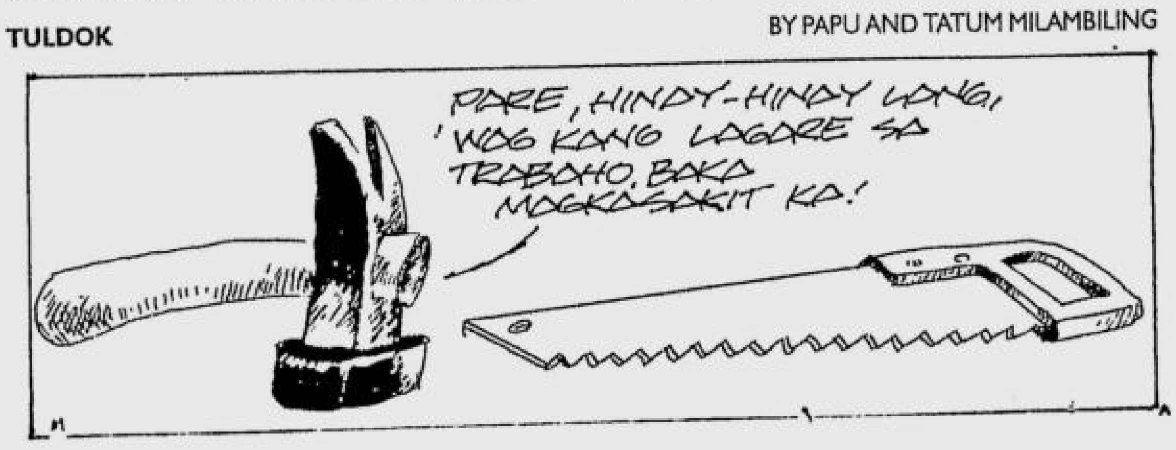
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


PAANO KA MAKAKA-THINK POSITIVE, MELANIE? GYERA DITO, GYERA DUON, BOM-BAHAN DITO, BOMBAHAN DUON...
DISASTER DITO, DISASTER DUON, NAKAWAN DITO, NAKAWAN DUON, POVERTY DITO, POVERTY DUON, SAKIT DITO, SAKIT DUON!! PAANO?!
E, DI...
PATAYIN MO ANG TV!!!
KLIK!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


PARE, HINDI-HINDI LANG, 'WAG KANG LAGARE SA TRABAHO, BAKA MAGKASAKIT KA!

Courage, chatter change and other boob-tube booboos

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

HOST: WHAT WAS THE SECRET POWER THAT made your group win in the competition?

Guest: You just have to have the courage to give everything despite the strong *kalaban*!

(Sting like a bee, rage like a cow—that's the new sports mantra!)

* * *

Host: In only a few minutes, we will find out the winner of our singing contest. We will find out *kung sino ang maling magniningning*!

(*Ay, mali!*)

* * *

Host: How can we finally succeed as a country?

Guest: We must no more *inggitan*—each of us will in part our knowledge for all!

(*Ah*, please repeat?)

* * *

Host: When will the new condominium building be completed?

Guest: Actually, it's now ready for occupation!

(Uh, can we make that ready for occupancy?)

* * *

Host: What's happening now with the court case?

Guest: Still the same, hearing *mga* arguments *ng depensa at* prostitution.

(*Ang sakit mo namang magsalita…*)

* * *

Host: We're so happy to finally get you on the show. Can you greet our viewers, your fans?

Guest: Hi there to all of us!

(No comment.)

* * *

Host: Your former boyfriend has been sending out hints that he still loves you. Do you think there's a chance for reconciliation?

Guest: Well, it's all out to him!

(*Isa ka pa.*)

* * *

Host: What's the next step in your electoral complaint?

Guest: Next, we have to compare the forms in question, *para makita na* authentic *ang mga dinoktor* na election forms.

(Authentic? *Dinoktor? Ano ba talaga, kuya?*)

* * *

Host: Do you think there's any hope for the Philippines?

Guest: We have to be optimistic, but we also have to face the fact that the country is in grieve danger.

(Boo-hoo.)

* * *

Host: So, what changes do we need to make?

Guest: Well, first of all, chatter change!

(That's easy—we just love to chatter!)

* * *

Host: What more do you need to get your group's petition approved?

Guest: We thought we were complete, but now they tell us we need more supporting peppers.

(As Paris Hilton would say, that's hot, that's really hot!)

* * *

Host: Why haven't you gotten married yet?

Guest: Don't worry, it will come—as they say, like a trip in the night!

(No, that isn't what they say…)

* * *

Host: What will your group's international performing tour achieve?

Guest: We hope that it will open doors abroad for other Pinoy musicans as well!

(What in the world are musicans—are they like politicans, dieticans—or Mohicans?)

FEEDBACK

Inaccurate

From Aldrin Redolme (AldrinRed@gmail.com), 11 Metroville Subd, Ma-a, Davao City:

This is about Alfonso Pastores' accusation that ABS-CBN has "no originality." I don't think GMA did it (coverage of a Pinoy climber's Mt. Everest expedition) first; it was ABS-CBN's "The Correspondents"—more precisely, Abner Mercado's report on the Philippine contingent going to Mt. Everest months before GMA's announcement of their Mt. Everest thing. I think you just have to check your data.

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Cinema 6 – 1:10 PM, 4:00, 6:50, 9:40
GREENBELT 3
Cinema 1** – 1:55 PM, 4:40, 7:25, 10:10
Cinema 2** – 2:35 PM, 5:20, 8:05, 10:50
Cinema 5* – 12:30 PM, 3:15, 6:00, 8:45, 11:30
GLORIETTA 1
Cinema 1 – 11:30 AM, 2:10 PM, 4:50, 7:30
Cinema 2 – 1:30 PM, 4:10, 6:50, 9:30
GREENBELT 1
Cinema 2 – 12:30 PM, 3:10, 5:50, 8:30
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Cinema 2 – 11:50 AM, 2:30 PM, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30
Cinema 5 – 12:20 PM, 3:00, 5:40, 8:20, 11:00
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Cinema 3 – 12:15 PM, 3:05, 5:55, 8:45
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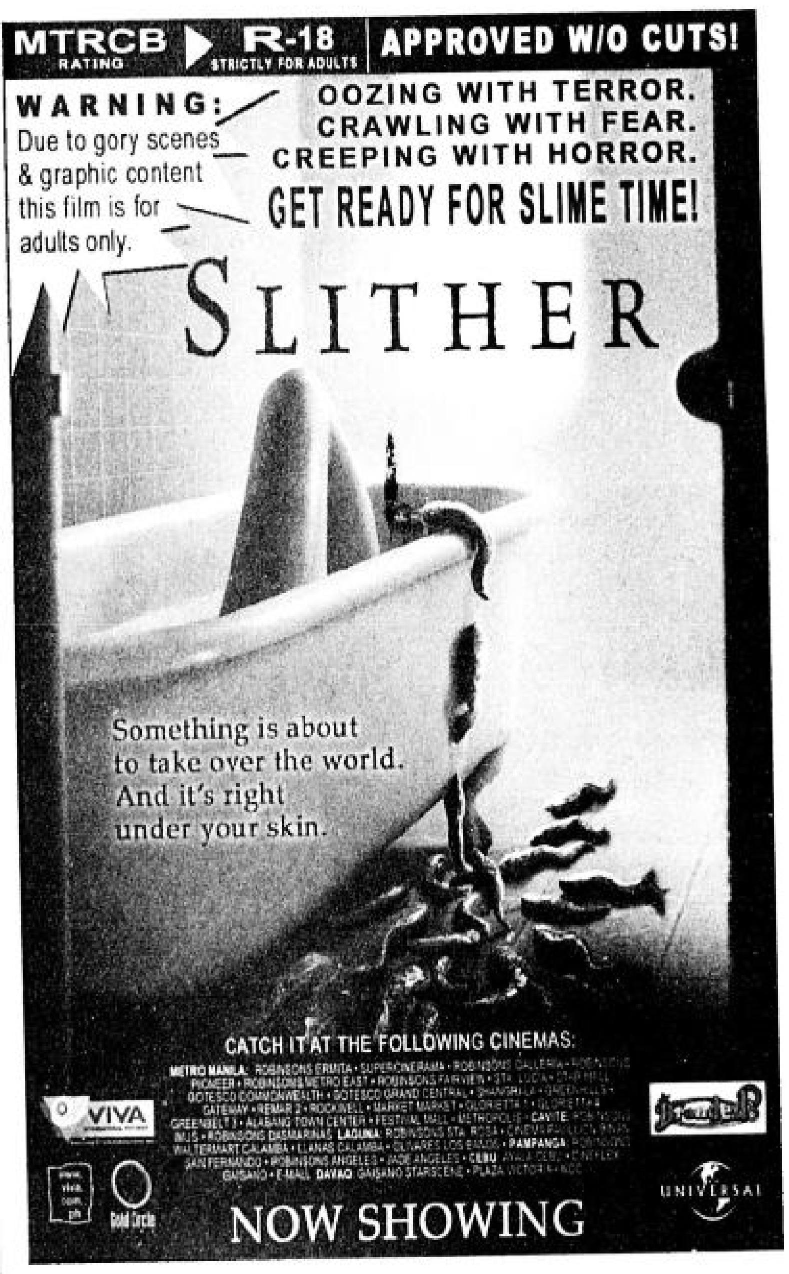
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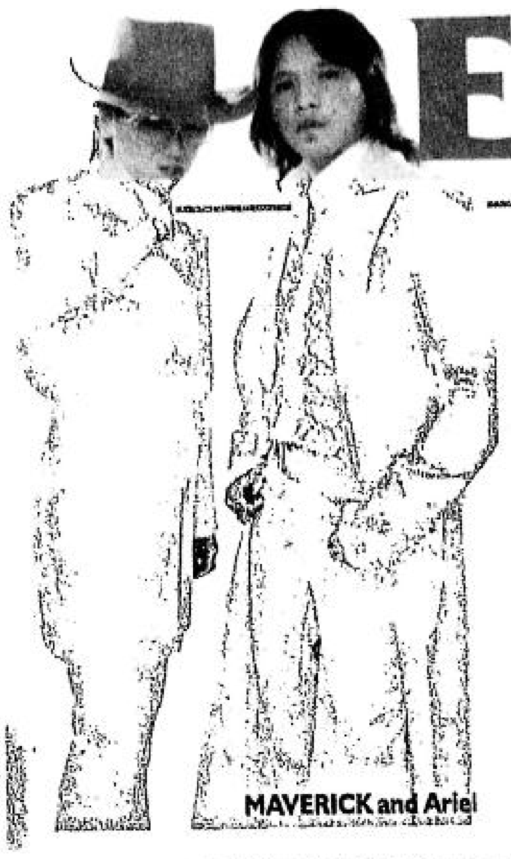
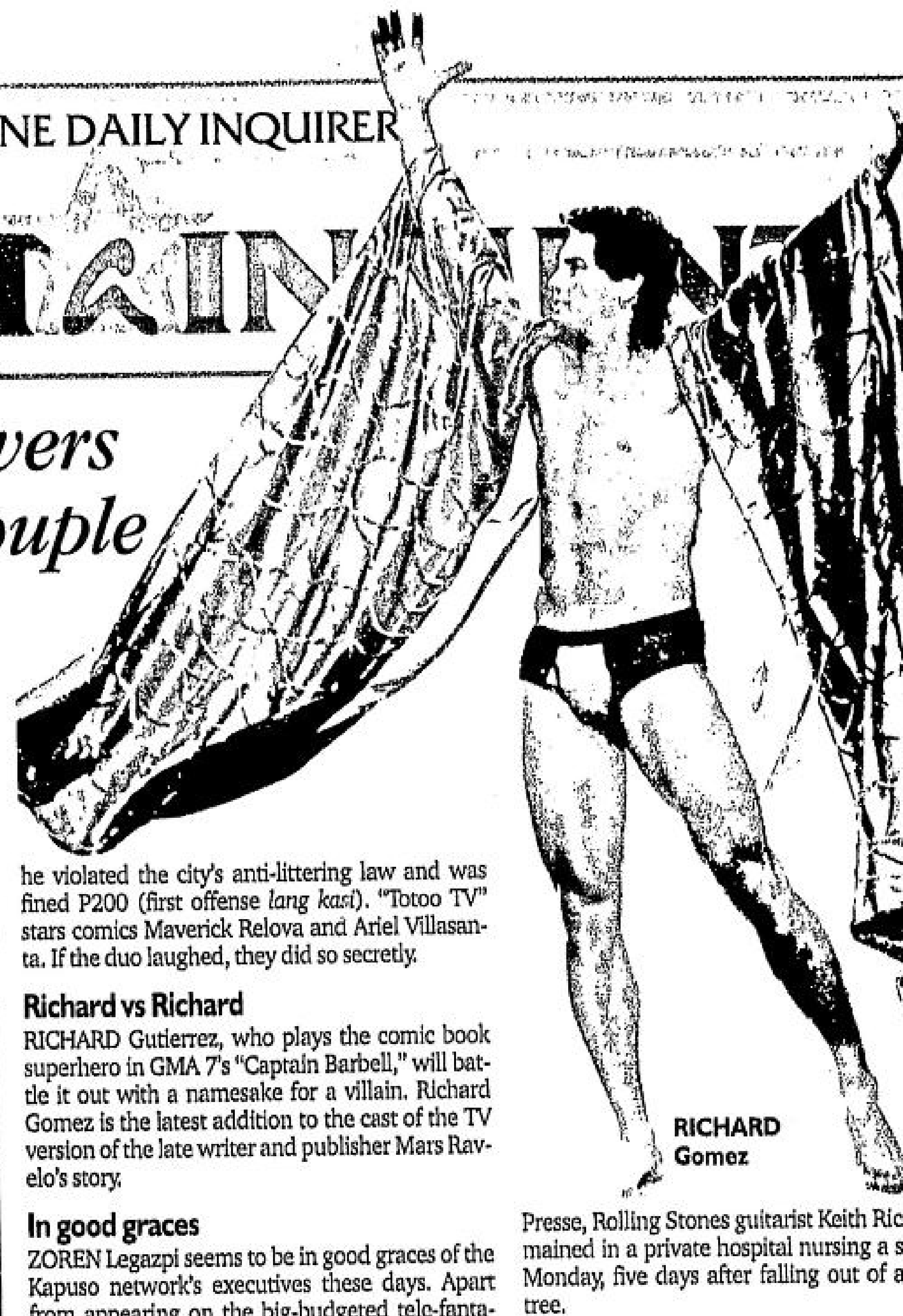


MAVERICK and Ariel



RICHARD Gomez

Estranged lovers play loving couple

ONLY A FEW MONTHS AFTER THEIR BREAKup, Jean Garcia and Gardo Versoza will be seen as a couple in an episode of GMA 7's drama series, "Magpakailanman," this month. Jean plays a struggling single mom whose children are all bound to die at age 8 due to a rare disease.

RUSHES

Trashing while taping

LITTERING in Puerto Princesa, Palawan, gets anyone arrested. This happened to a cameraman of ABC 5 who was there last month.

While taping for the reality show "Totoo TV," he violated the city's anti-littering law and was fined P200 (first offense *lang kasi*). "Totoo TV" stars comics Maverick Relova and Ariel Villasanta. If the duo laughed, they did so secretly.

Richard vs Richard

RICHARD Gutierrez, who plays the comic book superhero in GMA 7's "Captain Barbell," will battle it out with a namesake for a villain. Richard Gomez is the latest addition to the cast of the TV version of the late writer and publisher Mars Ravelo's story.

In good graces

ZOREN Legaspi

ZOREN Legazpi seems to be in good graces of the Kapuso network's executives these days. Apart from appearing on the big-budgeted tele-fantasya, "Majika," Zoren is also part of GMA 7's newest series, "Fantastikids"—as director!

Hug-deprived

CHINESE star Zhang Ziyi cried every day after returning to her room while shooting the movie, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," (2000), because the work was so difficult, reported Hong Kong's Apple Daily.

She had needed an encouraging hug from director Ang Lee, but he never gave it to her, the Associated Press said, quoting the paper. However, she said, Lee frequently hugged her co-star, Malaysian-Chinese Michelle Yeoh.

Coconut head

KEITH Richards REUTERS

IN NEW Zealand, according to Agence France Presse, Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards remained in a private hospital nursing a sore head Monday, five days after falling out of a coconut tree.

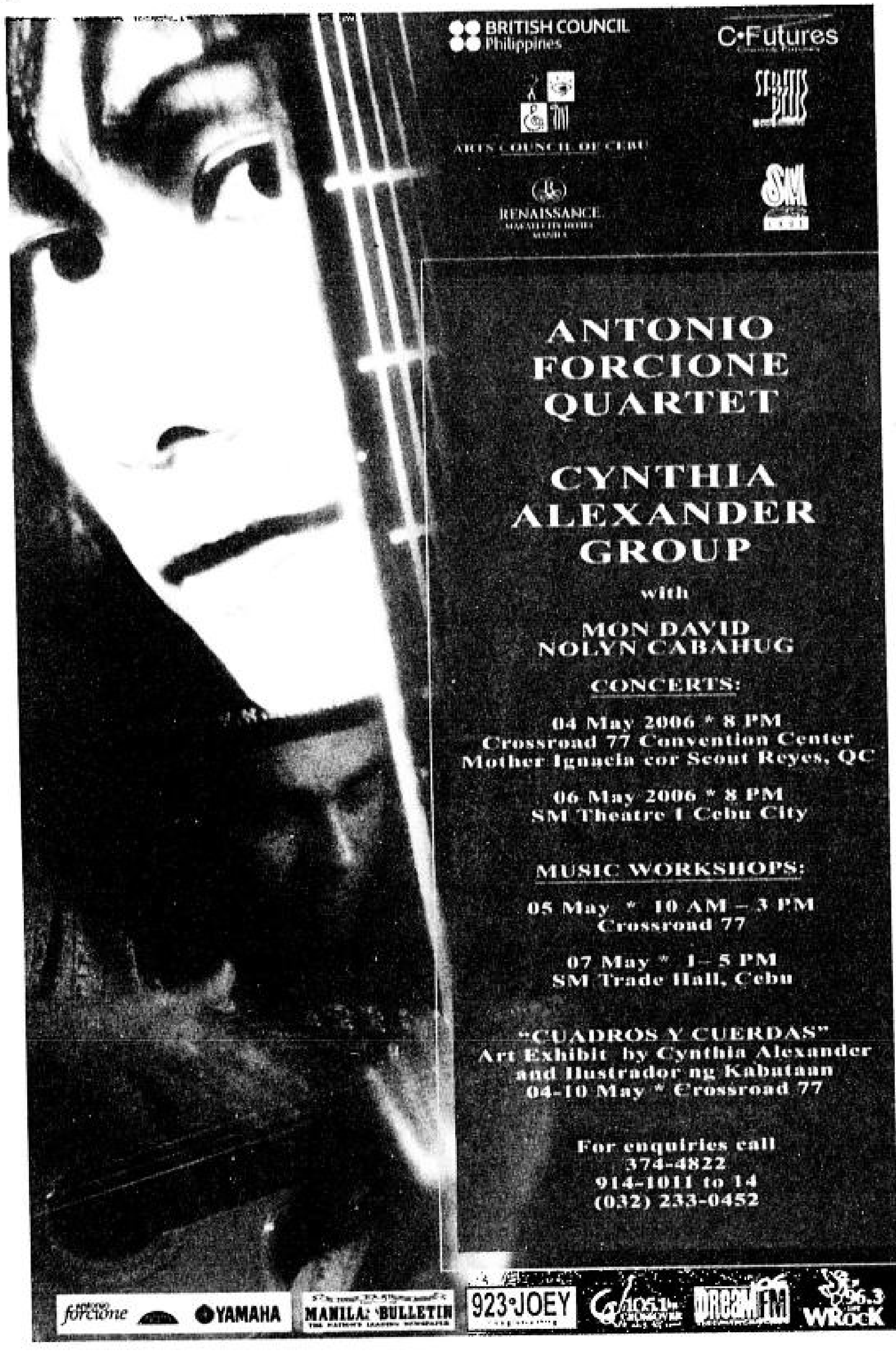
Most influential Combs

HIP HOP artist Sean "Puffy" Combs is among Time magazines 100 most influential persons this year. Among the others on the list are US President George Bush and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. *Reuters*

Most beautiful wife

SOFIA Arzhakovskaya AP

AN 18-year-old Russian was crowned Mrs World 2006, the most beautiful married woman in the world, last week. In awards rites held in St. Petersburg, Russia, Sofia Arzhakovskaya triumphed over 33 other participants from around the planet. RP's Maricarl Tolosa-Cabel, was in the top 10. Melanie Marquez didn't get past the semifinals last year.



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ROUNDUP

Tops in US, Canada

LOS ANGELES—Audiences hit the road with Robin Williams as his family-vacation romp "RV" opened at No. 1 with $16.4 million, while the acclaimed Sept. 11 drama "United 93" debuted with $11.6 million).

Weekend studio estimates had Disney's sports comedy "Stick It" in third slot, premiering with $11.3 million.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at US and Canadian theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc., official trackers:

1) "RV," $16.4M; 2) "United 93," $11.6M; 3) "Stick It," $11.3M; 4) "Silent Hill," $9.3M; 5) "Scary Movie 4," $7.8M; 6) "The Sentinel," $7.6M; 7) "Ice Age: The Meltdown," $7.05M; 8) "Akeelah and the Bee," $6.25M; 9) "The Wild," $4.7M; 10. "The Benchwarmers," $4.4M. *AP*

WILLIAMS in "RV"

Phone royalties

LOS ANGELES—Three Hollywood labor unions have inked new contracts that will compensate actors, writers and directors and others involved in the ABC drama "Lost" for the broadcast of snippets of the show on mobile phones.

The deals guarantee union health and pension benefits and minimum payments, and could be a blueprint for similar agreements involving other TV content for the growing mobile phone entertainment market.

The contract is a "crucial first step into a new frontier of production and content distribution," said Alan Rosenberg, president of the Screen Actors Guild.

The Writers Guild of America, west, and the Directors Guild of America also were part of the new labor pact. *AP*

Have you read it?

NEW YORK—Yes, there are still people who haven't read "The Da Vinci Code." But the number seems to be shrinking.

Dan Brown's international sensation has sold around 1.4 million copies in its first month as a paperback release, a big number for any book and astonishing for a novel that's already sold more than 40 million copies in hardcover. *AP*

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Customs exceeds ₱16-B target for April

Excess collections reach ₱3.9B in first 4 months

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS YESTERDAY SAID THAT IT HAS EXceeded its P16-billion collection target for April by P300 million, the fourth consecutive month that it has met is collection goals.

Acting Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales said in a briefing that the P300 million in excess collection last month brought the agency's total surplus for the first four months of the year to P3.9 billion. For the first quarter, its collections were P3.6 billion higher than its P38.6-billion target.

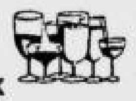
Being the second-biggest revenue earner among government agencies, the BOC's ability to meet its collection targets boosts the national government's chances of achieving its budget-deficit reduction goal.

The customs chief attributed the higher-than-programmed revenue collection, made up largely of duties imposed on imports, to the BOC's ongoing program to tighten auditing of shipments and improving the system of valuation of imported goods.

The BOC likewise attributed its over-per-

CUSTOMS/ B5

WHAT'S INSIDE



iBank plays into UnionBank hands /B5

UnionBank eyes iBank

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE ABOITIZ GROUP'S UNION BANK OF THE Philippines is looking at acquiring a controlling stake in publicly listed International Exchange Bank as part of its goal to be among the country's top three banks by 2010, INQUIRER sources said.

A merger between the two medium-sized lenders would create the Philippines' ninth biggest bank with combined assets of about P168 billion, edging out the Yuchengcos' Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.

A source from UnionBank confirmed the bank's interest in iBank, but said there was no deal yet among the shareholders.

"It's a prospective candidate. We're at the feeling-up stage," the source said.

In an earlier interview, Jon Ramon Aboitiz, chair of the bank's parent Aboitiz Equity Ventures, said the underleveraged Unionbank was bound to make an acquisition.

"If you want to leap-frog, you've got to do an acquisition. Otherwise, if it's organic (growth), it will take too long," he said.

UnionBank, capitalized at P19 billion, earlier attempted to bid for Philippine National Bank, but its offer was matched by the group of tobacco magnate Lucio Tan, which exercised its preemptive right as the existing dominant shareholder.

Banking sources said UnionBank, ranked 13th biggest based on end-2005 resources, was attracted by iBank's relatively good balance sheet and branch network.

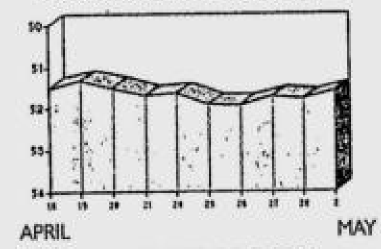
"It doesn't have as strong a franchise as PNB but it's a good bank," one source said.

As of end-2005, iBank's return-on-equity

UNIONBANK/ B5

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱51.60 = $1

As of 5 p.m., May 2, 2006

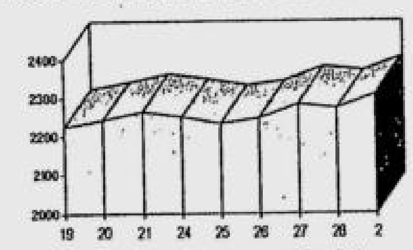
¥113.82 = $1

As of 5 p.m., May 2, 2006

GOLD: $654.50-655.00

per ounce Hong Kong, May 2, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B4)

Stocks near 7-year high

SHARE PRICES ROSE 1.55 PERcent yesterday to the highest close in almost seven years as investors were reassured by relatively peaceful Labor Day protests, dealers said.

It was feared that mass protests by leftist groups on May 1 would result in violence but the day passed without major incident.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index added 35.11 points to 2,305.64 after trading between 2,270.53 and 2,313.74. This was the highest closing level since Aug. 5, 1999, when the main index settled at 2,348.24.

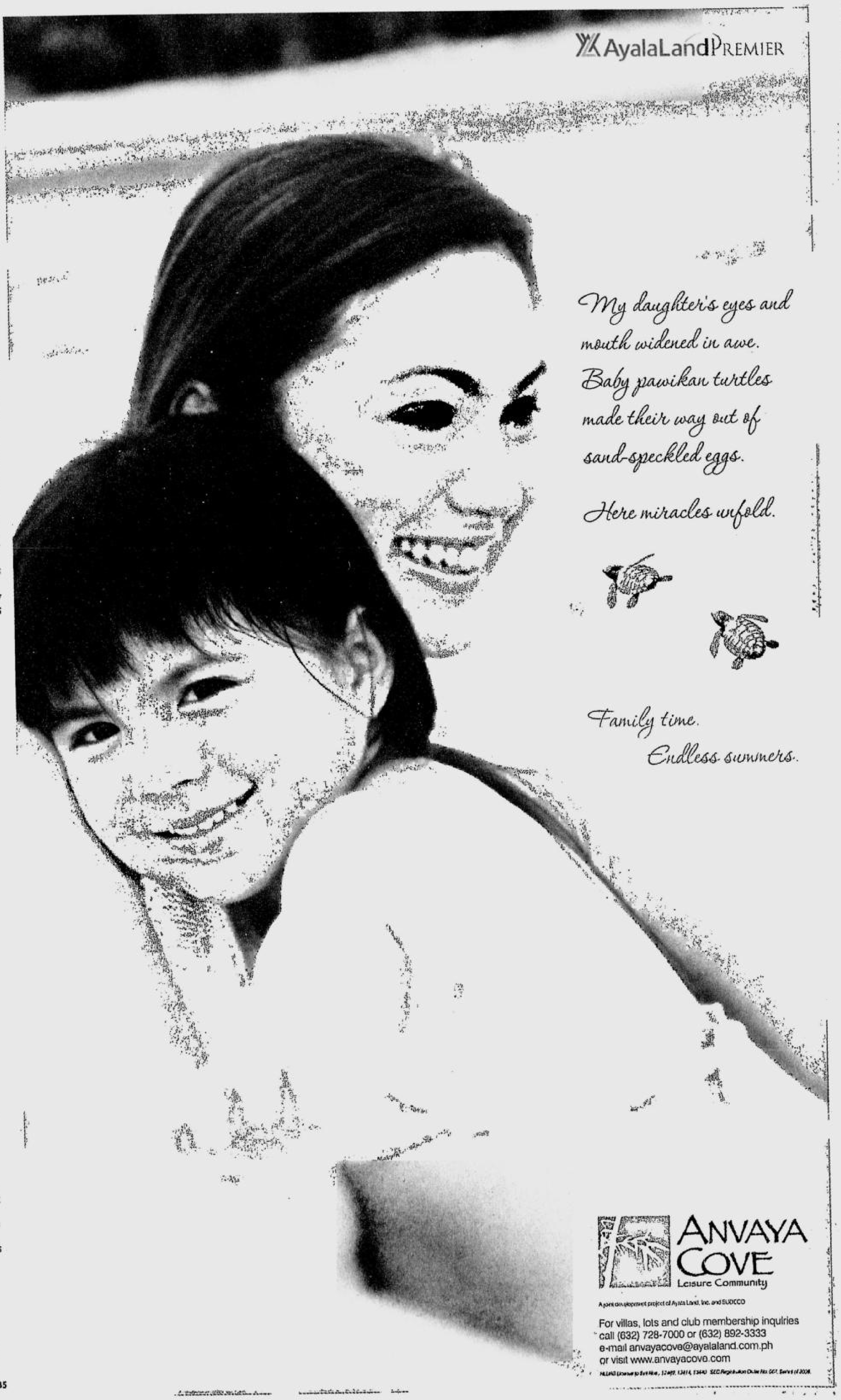
Volume was 1.24 billion shares worth P1.96 billion.

The broader all-shares index advanced 23.21 points to 1,431.64.

Gainers outnumbered decliners 74 to 27, with 38 stocks unchanged.

"Investors were relieved that contrary to

STOCKS/ B5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2 Chinese agencies compete for Subic property

Creating more business opportunities in the freeport

By Ronnel W. Domingo

TWO AGENCIES OF THE CHINESE government are vying for a 100-hectare property in Subic for their respective industrial park development projects that would cater to investors from China, according to the freeport's top official.

Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Administrator Armand C. Arreza said this developed as the agency recently signed with Chinese transnational firm Hebei Jingniu Group an agreement on the company's plan to put up a $300-million manufacturing base for high-tech glass products in Subic.

The government of Hebei province, through the glass manufacturer, wants the land in Subic's Tipo area for its own industrial zone.

Also, Arreza said Beijing, through the Ministry of Commerce, was set to build 10 industrial zones in the region amid ongoing efforts to put in place free trade arrangement between the Mainland and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"A team from Hebei is expected to visit this month to follow up on their interests in Subic," he said.

Hebei intends to have four productions lines in its glass factory, two for float glass and another two for ceramic glass.

This came in line with joint efforts of the Chinese government and the SBMA to create opportunities for more investments, businesses and tourists to cross the South China Sea from both shores.

Last month, SBMA said at least three more local governments in China—Shijiazhuang and Taizhou cities, as well as one municipality in Southern China—were interested in opening direct chartered flights between the Mainland and the freeport.

Shijiazhuang City is the capital of Hebei province, which has a population of 68 million and is considered the sixth richest province of China.

The proposed flights would be in addition to the current domestic and international direct flights such as the Mandarin Air's Subic-Taiwan route, Cebu Pacific's Subic-Incheon (South Korea) and Air Philippines Subic-Guangzhou flights.

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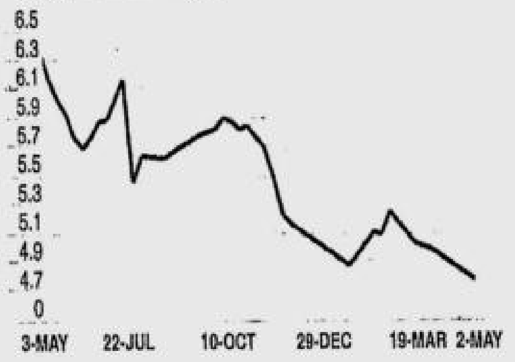
91-DAY TREASURY BILL RATES

May 3, 2005 to May 2, 2006



91-day T-bill rate up 14.8 bps to 4.768%

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BELLWETHER 91-DAY TREASURY BILL rate rose 14.8 basis points to 4.768 percent yesterday, as the market tried to push interest rates higher.

The market deems the rates have gone too low that they might discourage investments.

The 182-day bill also fetched a higher rate of 5.582 percent, up 24.5 basis points from week-ago level.

Only the 364-day bill rate fell yesterday, recording a 1.1-basis point decline to 5.799 percent.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said the rates (for the 91- and 182-day bills) had gone down precipitously. The market realized the rates were too low, so they are now pushing them higher, he said.

Two weeks ago, the rate for the 91-day bill neared its four-year low of 4.6 percent.

The decline in T-bill rates had resulted in interest rates dropping to levels lower than the inflation rate. This may discourage investments in debt instruments because the yields would only be gobbled up by the increases in consumer prices. Year-on-year inflation rate stood at 7.6 percent in March.

Cruz said the Treasury's auction committee accepted the higher bids as the offered rates reflected those in the secondary market. "This is where the rates are really going in the secondary market, and we respect it," he said. Cruz added that the relatively huge volume of bids for government securities made it reasonable for the auction committee to accept the higher risk premium sought by banks.

Tenders for the 91-day bill reached P2.2 billion, higher than the government's P1-billion borrowing program per T-bill maturity. Bids for the P182-day bill stood at P2. 61 billion, while those for the 364-day bill amounted to P3.655 billion.

The Treasury's auction committee accepted P3 billion worth of bids, or P1 billion per maturity, thus raising its programmed borrowings.

"We want to give the market a little respite. A little correction is welcome as long as the increase in the rates reflect the trading levels in the secondary market," Cruz said.

PLDT buying 20% of gaming firm for ₱502M

By Daxim L. Lucas

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE Co. yesterday formally announced its acquisition of a 20-percent stake in Internet gaming firm PhilWeb Corp. after months of negotiations.

The deal is expected to give online gaming in the country a big boost as PLDT's telecommunications resources—including the country's largest cellular phone network—are mated with PhilWeb's gaming franchise from the government.

In a statement, PLDT said the deal governing the acquisition by its e-business unit of 20 percent of PhilWeb from the group of former Trade Minister Roberto Ongpin was valued at P502.4 million.

"At a special board meeting held [yesterday], [PLDT's] board of directors approved the investment of ePLDT in PhilWeb," the company statement said.

"ePLDT will invest in and subscribe to newly issued common shares of PhilWeb equivalent to 20 percent of the total outstanding capital stock of the company at price of 2 centavos per share," it added.

The investment and subscription agreements are scheduled for signing on May 5, 2006.

ePLDT is a wholly-owned subsidiary of PLDT.

PhilWeb is primarily engaged in internet-based gaming, thru its appointment as principal technology service provider of the Philippine Gaming and Amusement Corp. (Pagcor) with which it has a marketing consultancy agreement for Internet sports betting and Internet casino operations.

As of end-April 2006, PhilWeb offers Internet sports betting in over 230 Pagcor Internet sports betting stations (ISBS) and over 40 Internet casino stations nationwide.

ePLDT plans to assist PhilWeb in the nationwide roll out its Internet sports betting stations and Internet casino stations, using principally the telecommunication network resources of the

PLDT/ B3

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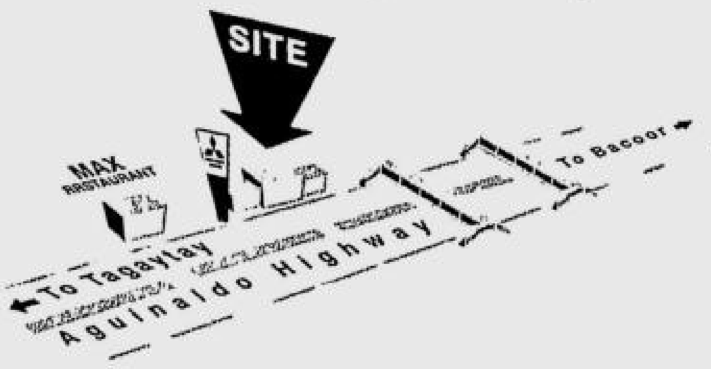

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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corporation

PLDT buying 20% of gaming firm

From page B2

PLDT group.

The deal will also allow PLDT to bring gaming services to its millions of mobile phone users.

"The investment will enable the PLDT group, through ePLDT, to gain a firm hold on legitimate gaming content for the group's mobile business as well as its wired and wireless broadband businesses, and to influence the nature of the content consistent with the requirement of the PLDT group to increase the usage of its various network resources," the company said.

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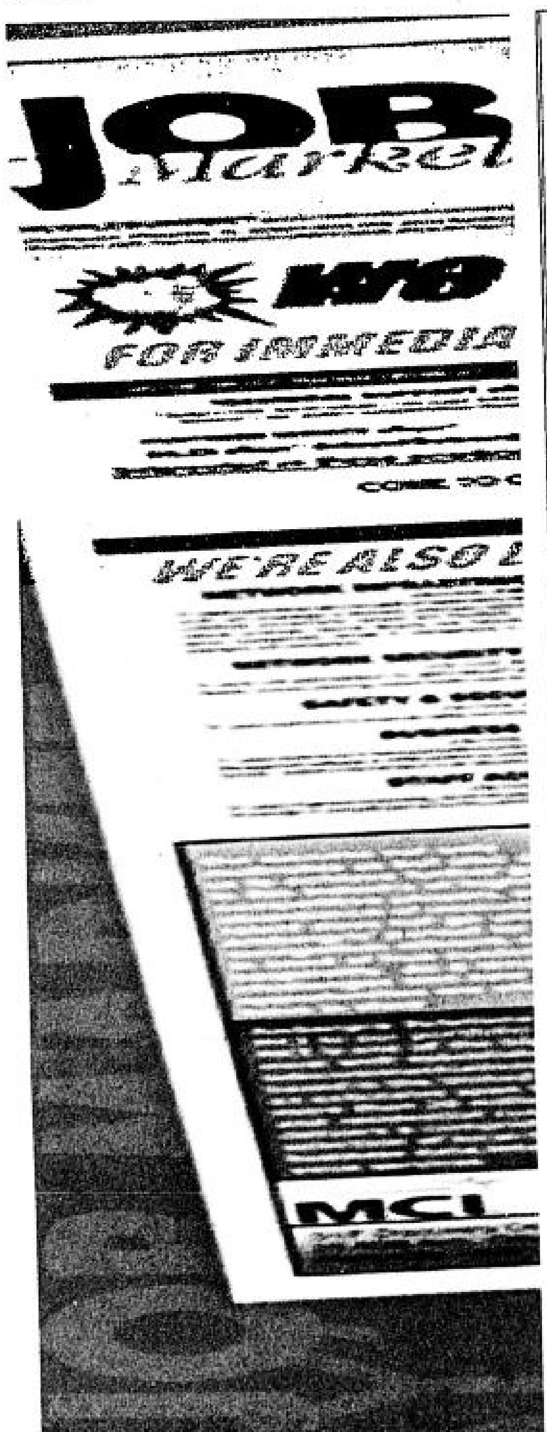
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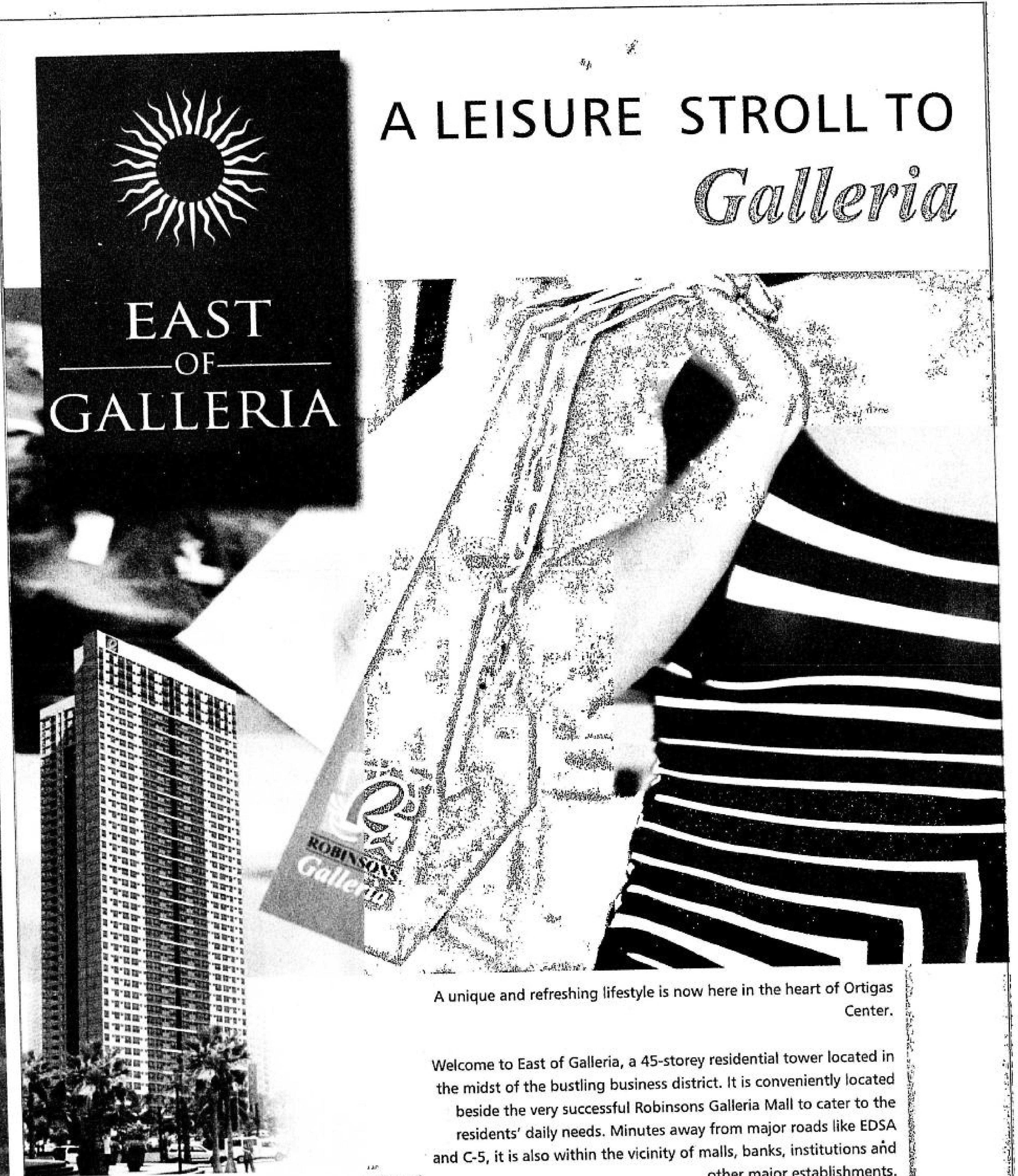

EAST OF GALLERIA

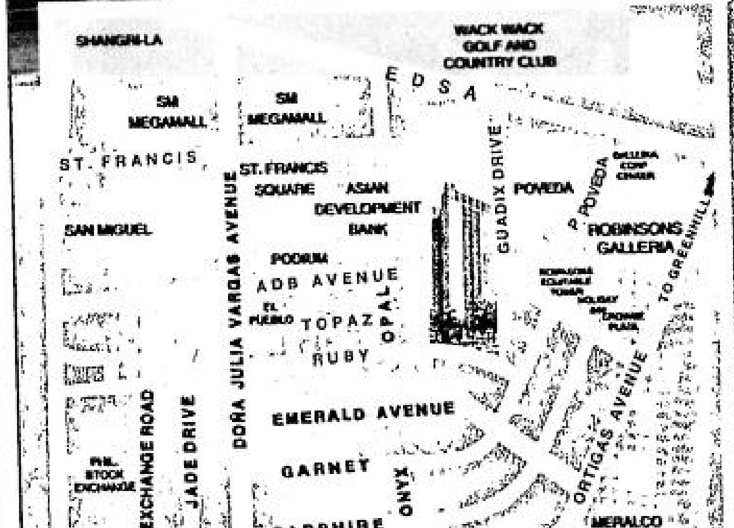
A LEISURE STROLL TO Galleria

A unique and refreshing lifestyle is now here in the heart of Ortigas Center.

Welcome to East of Galleria, a 45-storey residential tower located in the midst of the bustling business district. It is conveniently located beside the very successful Robinsons Galleria Mall to cater to the residents' daily needs. Minutes away from major roads like EDSA and C-5, it is also within the vicinity of malls, banks, institutions and other major establishments.

East of Galleria truly embodies the ideal of comfort and convenience, offering the best of both worlds with the choice of either bi-level or loft-type units. Available in one, two and three-bedroom units, East of Galleria assures residents of utmost privacy in condo living as the master's bedroom is located a level above the dining, kitchen and living areas. High ceilings, airy atmosphere and expansive glass windows feature breathtaking views of the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club as well as a multitude of magnificent skylines.

At the heart of the busy city lies a comfortable and affordable home, here at East of Galleria.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Commodities continue to soar

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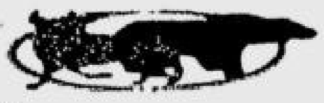

Ron Nathan

THIS IS PART 2 OF MY BRONTOSAURUS, IN which alternative meanings are given to common words:

1. Coffee—a person upon whom one has coughed.
2. Flabbergasted—appalled by how much weight you have gained.
3. Abdicate—to give up all hope of ever having a flat stomach.
4. Esplanade—to attempt on explanation while drunk.
5. Negligent—a condition in which you absentmindedly answer the door in your negligee.
6. Willy nilly—impotent (I like this one).
7. Lymph—to walk with a lisp.
8. Gargoyle—an antiseptic mouthwash
9. Flatulence—an emergency vehicle that picks you up after you have been run over by a steamroller.
10. Balderdash—a rapidly receding hairline.
11. Pokemo—a rough proctologist
12. Frisbeetarianism—the belief that when you die, your soul flies up on to the roof and gets stuck there.
13. Circumvent—an opening in the front of boxer shorts worn by Jewish men.

Part 3 will appear next week and is a little harder to figure out.

* * * * *

Over the long weekend, commodity prices continued to hit new highs with gold at $660 an ounce. Copper, zinc, nickel and most other metals made record highs last week and so far, there has been no serious correction.

Oil remains close to its recent record high of $75.17 a barrel over concern about Iran and its potential for making nuclear weapons.

Threats of sanctions do not seem to be having much effect on the Iranian prime minister and with mid-term elections coming up in a few months, I do not see President Bush launching an air strike.

The only glimmer of hope is that Iran might transfer its uranium processing to Russia under the watchful eye of inspectors.

If this should transpire, commodity prices, especially oil, could fall, together with gold, which is a safe haven in times of uncertainty.

Over the past two months, the dollar has been falling steadily and even in the last month, it has slipped 5 percent against the pound and 4 percent against the euro. As all commodities are quoted in dollars, they tend to move on the opposite direction to maintain their true value.

If you plot metal prices in pounds or euro, the charts look very different and, if you adjust for inflation, many commodities are at a fraction of their former highs.

For example, in 1980, gold hit a high of $875 an ounce. If you adjust for 26 years of inflation, the current price of $660 looks to be only a fraction of what it was.

That is why many commodity traders feel that prices could go much higher and Marc Faber predicted that if the DOW tripled in the next 10 years, gold would reach $6,000 an ounce. However, he likes to seek publicity so this should not be taken too seriously.

Somewhat more credible was Jim Rogers, previously a partner of George Soros, in running the Quantum Fund. On Bloomberg, he said that in almost all cases, not only for metals but also for soft commodities such as coffee, soya beans, cotton and sugar, demand-outstripped supply.

Over the decades, demand from a population of six billion had greatly increased but in most cases supply had peaked and not been replaced.

In the case of oil, demand was rising at a rapid rate but production was already close to maximum output and there were little untapped reserves, which could be brought on stream rapidly. To make matters worse, no refineries have been built in the last 30 years so refining is a major problem.

It takes years and hundreds of millions of dollars to build refineries and he did not foresee any quick solution from fuel cells or solar power.

Ethanol substitution in Brazil was working well and costs only $7 a barrel but every other country would first have to build refineries and then persuade car manufacturers to produce new engines to run on a blend of 70 percent ethanol and 30 percent petroleum.

This would take years and in the meantime, demand would keep on rising unless China's expansion came to an abrupt halt. There is no sign of this happening and the latest figures show that its economy is still accelerating.

He thought that commodity boom would continue. Previous bull markets in commodities have lasted between 15 and 23 years and this bull market is only in its 7th year.

He also said that investors were realizing that commodity funds were producing far better returns than any equity or bond market, so huge sums of money were being invested in them.

The funds have to invest this money thereby pushing commodity prices up still further. I found all this fascinating but I am no expert

COMMODITIES/ B6

EXPORT AND INDUSTRY BANK

NOTICE OF 2006 ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given that the 2006 annual stockholders' meeting of **EXPORT AND INDUSTRY BANK, INC.**, will be held on **Friday, May 26, 2006, at 8:00 A.M.**, at the **Lower Lobby, ExportBank Plaza, ExportBank Drive corner Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City.**

The Agenda for the meeting is as follows:

1. Call to Order
2. Secretary's Proof of Due Notice of the Meeting and Determination of Quorum
3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Stockholders' Meetings
    - a. 2004 Annual Stockholders' Meeting
    - b. January 25, 2006 Special Stockholders' Meeting
4. Management Report
5. Ratification of Acts of the Board of Directors and Management During the Previous Years
6. Election of Directors (including Independent Directors)
7. Appointment of External Auditor
8. Other Matters
9. Adjournment

Common stockholders of record as of **May 05, 2006** will be entitled to notice of, and vote at, said meeting. The stock and transfer books of the Corporation will be closed as of said date and until after the annual meeting.

If you cannot personally attend the meeting and if you wish to, you may designate your authorized representative by submitting a signed PROXY instrument to the Office of the Corporate Secretary, Export and Industry Bank, Inc., 37/F ExportBank Plaza, ExportBank Drive corner Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City, not later than **5:00 P.M., May 19, 2006 (Friday)**, for verification and record purposes. The proxy instrument shall conform with the requirements of the Corporation Code, and should be affixed with a duly paid documentary stamp tax in accordance with Sec. 192 of the National Internal Revenue Code.

Makati City, May 02, 2006.

Original Signed
RAMON F. AVIADO, JR.
Corporate Secretary

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of May 2, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	5	5.6	5	5.6	390,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	35.5	35.5	35	35.5	151,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	61	62.5	61	62	4,864,200
China Banking Corp.	800	800	780	780	3,650
Citystate Savings Bank	20.25	20.25	20.25	20.25	300
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.41	0.42	0.41	0.42	2,710,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	72	75	72	73.5	583,800
International Exch. Bank	36	39.5	36	39	178,300
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	39	39.5	39	39	322,000
Philippine National Bank	33.5	35	33.5	34	6,000
Phil. Savings Bank	39	40	39	40	10,700
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14	15.25	14	15.25	408,800
Security Bank Corp.	48	49.5	48	49.5	477,300
Union Bank of the Phil.	38.5	40.5	38.5	40.5	113,700
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	100,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	30	30	30	30	10,000
Ivantage Corp.	1.3	1.42	1.28	1.42	30,872,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	45	45	45	45	33,100
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	45	45	44.5	44.5	374,300
Manila Electric Co. A	13	13	12.75	13	30,600
Manila Electric Co. B	18.5	18.75	18.5	18.5	681,700
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.5	6.8	6.5	6.8	9,711,000
Petron Corp.	4.25	4.4	4.25	4.35	3,567,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.98	0.98	0.94	0.95	420,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	6,000
CADP Group Corp.	2.85	3.3	2.85	3.15	167,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	3	3	3	3	4,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	21.25	21.25	21.25	21.25	113,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	35.5	36	35.5	36	123,400
RFM Corp.	0.73	0.75	0.73	0.75	790,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	3.5	3.55	3.5	3.5	3,273,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	20,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63.5	64	63	64	116,400
San Miguel Corp. B	80.5	81	80.5	81	228,400
Universal Robina Corp.	22.75	23.25	22.5	23	4,660,300
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	50,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.34	5,830,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.52	1.58	1.52	1.56	5,327,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	1	1.22	1	1.2	340,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	5	5.2	5	5.2	5,656,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1	1	1	1	50,000
CHEMICALS					
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	20,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.0725	0.09	0.0725	0.085	25,600,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	700,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	20,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	3,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	10,000,000
Ayala Corp.	360	372.5	360	370	281,500
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	250,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.6	6.2	5.6	5.9	1,483,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.75	2.8	2.75	2.8	393,000
APC Group Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	3,450,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	25,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.95	0.95	0.93	0.93	2,060,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.04	1.08	1.04	1.08	50,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	20,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	3,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.96	0.98	0.96	0.97	2,850,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.15	4.3	4.15	4.25	3,363,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.25	3.45	3.25	3.4	3,085,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.44	1.48	1.44	1.48	215,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	6.7	7.2	6.7	7.1	2,155,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	130,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.2	0.22	0.2	0.215	3,120,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.55	0.57	0.55	0.57	100,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	10,560,000
SM Investments Corp.	233	233	224	225	113,620
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.69	0.72	0.69	0.71	880,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co.	0.0675	0.07	0.0675	0.0675	4,200,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	12.25	12.75	12.25	12.5	9,825,500
Belle Corp.	1.26	1.3	1.26	1.28	7,629,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	990,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.31	1,610,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	2.02	2.2	2.02	2.2	3,592,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.74	1.74	1.7	1.7	2,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	1,060,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	10,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.66	0.67	0.66	0.66	29,070,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.42	1.46	1.4	1.46	17,143,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.245	0.27	0.245	0.27	9,860,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.56	0.6	0.56	0.57	3,880,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	100,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.46	1.48	1.44	1.44	41,839,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.25	0.26	0.245	0.25	31,640,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.27	0.29	0.27	0.28	420,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	700,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	9.9	11.25	9.9	10.75	736,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.32	0.36	0.32	0.33	22,800,000
SM Development Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.64	1.64	722,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.8	8	7.8	8	5,315,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	2,190,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13.75	14.5	13.75	14.5	508,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.06	1.08	1.06	1.08	3,492,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	900	940	900	935	46,140
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3	3.1	3	3.1	3,764,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2045	2060	2040	2040	119,030
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.225	1,500,000
Imperial Res.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	2,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.049	0.05	0.049	0.05	2,900,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	2,000
Philweb Corp.	0.026	0.027	0.025	0.027	151,500,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	2.95	3.05	2.95	3	715,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	12.25	12.25	12	12	1,953,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	10,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.74	1.76	1.72	1.76	530,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	700,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.54	0.56	0.54	0.56	200,000
EDUCATION					
IPeople Inc.	3.25	3.35	3.2	3.2	733,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.02	2.12	2.02	2.06	1,104,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	2.85	2.95	2.8	2.9	2,207,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	2.9	2.95	2.85	2.9	1,452,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0085	0.009	0.0085	0.0085	117,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	7.6	7.8	7.6	7.7	1,448,000
Benguet Corp. A	13	13	12	12	80,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.98	1.98	1.98	1.98	8,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.41	0.41	0.39	0.4	42,610,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.43	0.44	0.43	0.44	27,320,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.026	0.027	0.026	0.026	142,700,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.03	0.031	0.03	0.03	88,500,000
Omico Corp.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	13,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	4.15	4.25	4.15	4.15	8,771,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	4.2	4.25	4.15	4.15	10,005,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	28	28	27.5	27.5	42,500
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.35	0.38	0.35	0.38	450,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.45	0.51	0.45	0.51	2,150,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	700,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	205,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	18,200,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.92	0.95	0.9	0.95	1,730,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.96	0.98	0.95	0.98	380,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	8.2	11	8.2	10.5	4,226,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref.) SerieS U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,600
PLDT 10% Pref Series AA	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,500
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	13.75	14.75	13.75	14.5	12,425,000

CURRENCIES

May 2, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.794470	1.000000	51.7770
Japan	Yen	0.007009	0.008822	0.4568
United Kingdom	Pound	1.450624	1.825900	94.5396
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.102472	0.128982	6.6783
Switzerland	Franc	0.640031	0.805607	41.7119
Canada	Dollar	0.714259	0.899038	46.5495
Singapore	Dollar	0.503371	0.633593	32.8055
Australia	Dollar	0.604896	0.761383	39.4221
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.107572	2.652801	137.3541
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.211825	0.266624	13.8050
Brunei	Dollar	0.501781	0.631592	32.7019
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000091	0.000114	0.0059
Thailand	Baht	0.021243	0.026738	1.3844
UAE	Dirham	0.216312	0.272272	14.0974
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.258700	65.1717
Argentina	Peso	0.260739	0.328192	16.9928
Brazil	Real	0.382232	0.481116	24.9107
Denmark	Kroner	0.134108	0.168802	8.7401
India	Rupee	0.017745	0.022336	1.1565
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.219194	0.275900	14.2853
Mexico	New Peso	0.071719	0.090273	4.6741
New Zealand	Dollar	0.506807	0.637918	33.0295
Norway	Kroner	0.128491	0.161731	8.3739
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013231	0.016654	0.8623
South Africa	Rand	0.132524	0.166808	8.6368
Korea	Won	0.000843	0.001061	0.0549
Sweden	Kroner	0.107728	0.135597	7.0208
Syria	Pound	0.015305	0.019264	0.9974
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024931	0.031381	1.6248
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000370	0.000466	0.0241

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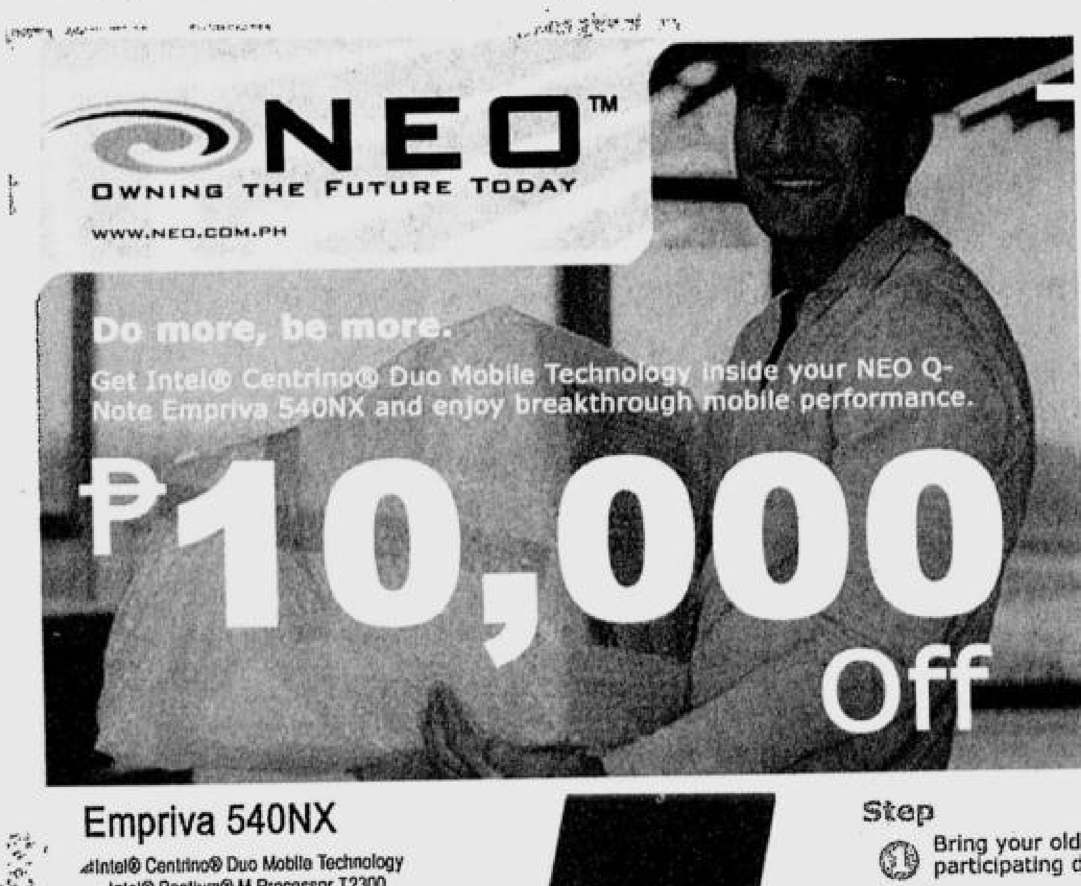
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Empriva 540NX

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    - Intel® 945GM Chipset
    - Intel® ProWireless 3945 a/b/g
- Microsoft® Windows® Media Center Edition
- Microsoft® Works
- 512MB DDR2 667 Memory
- 80GB SATA Hard Disk Drive
- 14" Widescreen WXGA TFT Display
- Intel® GMA 950 up to 128MB
- 8x DVD+/-RW
- Integrated Web Camera (1.3 Megapixels)
- Gigabit Ethernet 10/100/1000 Mbps LAN
- Integrated 56k Modem
- 4x USB 2.0, Firewire, S-Video out, 4-in-1 Memory Card Reader
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[redacted]

iBank plays into UnionBank hands

UNIONBANK IS LOOKING INTO ACQUIRING International Exchange Bank lock, stock and barrel, following iBank shareholder Enrique Razon Jr.'s expressing interest in unloading his stake, according to the grapevine.

Rumor of the possible acquisition has already perked up the iBank share price, which yesterday closed more than 13 percent higher, at P39, from Friday's P34.50.

UnionBank was similarly up, closing yesterday at P40.50 from Friday's P38.

Incidentally, easily the biggest market mover of the iBank shares was Fidelity Securities, whose listed trading participant, Ben Tiu, happens to also be the iBank vice chair.

Out of the 738,800 iBank shares that traded hands since the other Monday, 380,000 shares were sold and 282,000 bought by Fidelity.

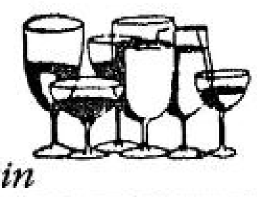
According to the grapevine, other iBank shareholders have also expressed interest in cashing out their stake in the 10-year-old bank, after learning that Razon was offering his 15.68-percent interest in iBank to the Aboitizes, UnionBank's majority shareholders.

Razon, who is better known as the chair and CEO of International Container Terminal Services Inc., was not available for comment. And neither was iBank president Ramon Sy.

Currently ranked as the country's 10th largest bank, UnionBank has set out to become one of the three biggest universal banks by 2010. It posted 2005 net earnings of P2.76 billion.

iBank was listed as the country's 17th largest in total capital as of 2004, reporting a net income of P523 million for the same year.

COCKTALES



Victor C. Agustin

According to the grapevine, iBank chair Gerardo Lanuza, who is in the United States, has sent word that he would join his fellow Castilaloy, Razon, in any putative sale.

Lanuza's Philrealty and his cousins Ortigas and Olbes families altogether control more than 17 percent of iBank.

If the sale pushes through, Lanuza could use the windfall to jumpstart Philrealty's Andrea project, the condominium complex in the former Pepsi-Cola plant in Quezon City whose completion had been stalled by the currency crisis.

The Tiu family, for its part, has been trying to raise venture capital for their planned luxury hotel to replace what is now the Gilarmi apartment-hotel on Ayala Avenue.

Which publisher, whose paper?

THE MANILA Standard Today was surprised to learn that their publisher, Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr., flew to Guam this long May Day weekend and addressed the Filipino-American Presidents Club in the US commonwealth territory.

In addition to his congressional title, Locsin was also identified by the Marianas Variety as a "newspaper publisher," although its Filipino expatriate reporter who covered the event did not identify which paper the Makati congressman was now representing.

Over at the Manila Standard Today, Locsin is more known as the "absentee publisher" for having made himself scarce after agreeing to merge his Today newspaper with Standard over the vigorous objections of the Standard union.

The merger even cost the job of Standard editor in chief Jullie Daza.

"Oh, we see him (Locsin) all right," said a Manila Standard Today staffer. "His picture is posted every day in the Business Mirror website," referring to the new business daily controlled by insurance-and-motel magnate Antonio Cabangon Chua.

Heard through the grapevine

THE BOARDROOM row at Equitable PCIBank may still be unresolved, but the contending parties are apparently not making any move to change the composition of their nominees—the same set of directors are being renominated—for the May 23 stockholders' meeting.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Stocks near . . .

From page B1

expectations, Labor Day ended without any violence," Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities Inc. said.

Dealers said they felt most shares have been overbought and profit-taking would likely emerge soon.

"Investors may start to cash in once first-quarter results start coming out," Vistan said, adding the earnings may have been hurt by higher taxes and rising commodity costs.

Ayala Land Inc. closed up 75 centavos at P12.50.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. ended down P5 at P2,040 while rival Globe Telecom gained P35 to P935.

San Miguel Corp.'s A-shares, limited to Filipinos, closed flat at P64 while San Miguel B-shares, which foreign investors can buy, added a peso to P81. *AFP*

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UnionBank eyes iBank

From page B1

stood at 12.2 percent while UnionBank's was 14.69 percent.

iBank ranks 17th among the country's biggest banks with assets of about P60 billion as against UnionBank's P108 billion. iBank operates about 75 branches while UnionBank has 111.

Another source said that since iBank debuted on the Philippine Stock Exchange, it was a lucrative takeover target. The bank's shares have been steadily rising since it went public in December 2004.

"UnionBank needs this acquisition because iBank is into that business that UnionBank doesn't have, which is lending," another industry source said.

Although UnionBank is the bigger bank, iBank's loan portfolio is more than double at P28 billion against the former's P11 billion.

Among iBank's shareholders are JTKC Equities Inc. (25.82 percent); iVantage Corp. (17.22 percent); Razon Industries Inc. (16.48 percent); Greenhills Properties Inc. (9.34 percent), and Philippine Realty & Holdings Corp. (8.61 percent).

Since its opening as a full-service commercial bank in September 1995, iBank has achieved robust growth by focusing on the needs of the middle market, transactional deposit customers and large- and medium-sized investors.

UnionBank has core strengths in corporate cash management, payment services, foreign exchange and capital markets.

"The INQUIRER tried to reach iBank president and founder Ramon Sy yesterday but he was not available for comment as of press time."

Customs exceeds ₱16-B target for April

From page B1

formance in April and the three preceding months of the year to its anti-smuggling program, particularly the Run After the Smugglers (RATS). The BOC said it was working on its institutionalization to better curb the perennial problem of smuggling.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, who was in the same press briefing, said the BOC's collection for April was boosted by the P1.7 billion worth of duties it collected from the National Food Authority, which imports rice.

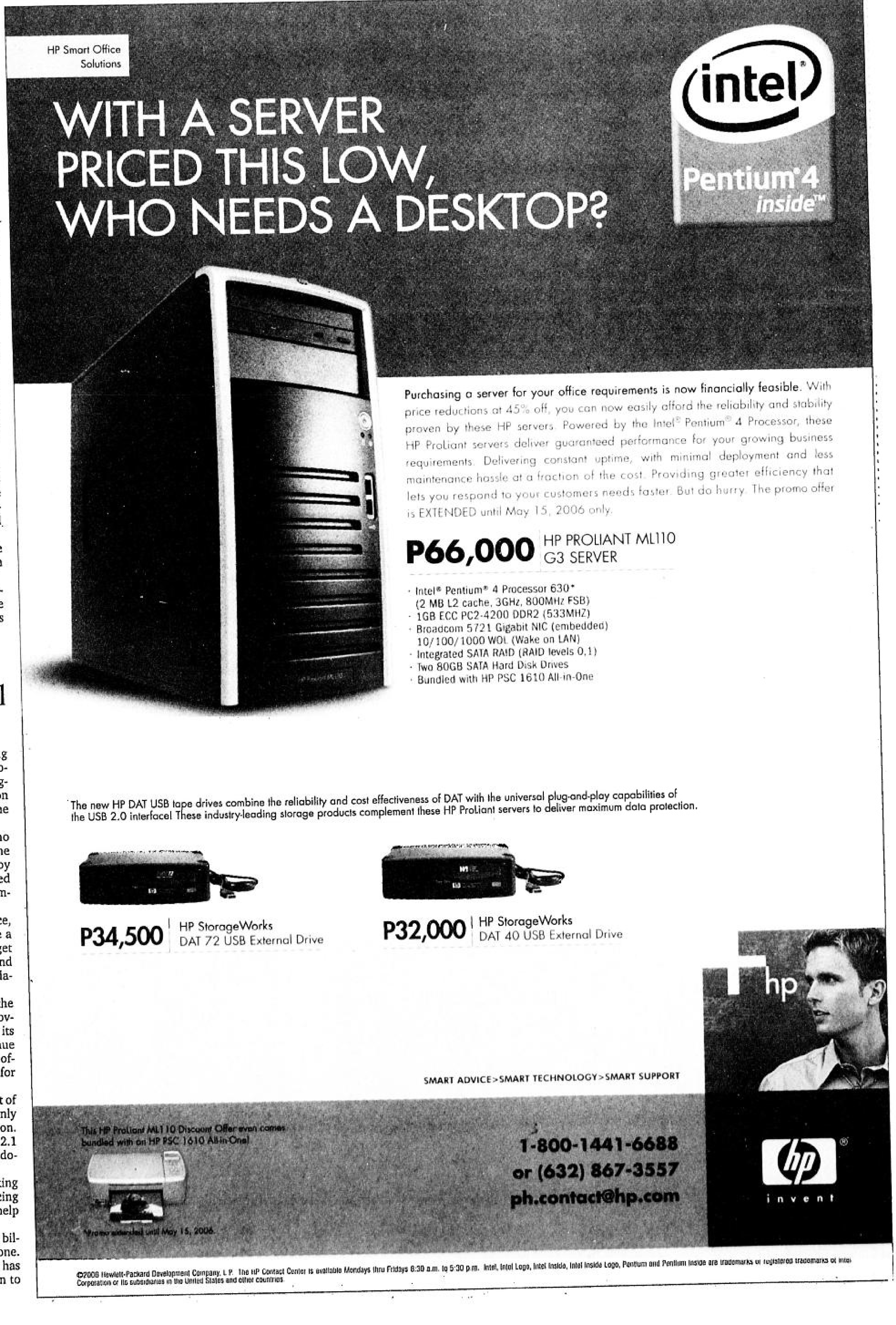
But Teves said the Department of Finance, head agency of the BOC, still did not have a hint about the national government's budget deficit for April as other revenue agencies and the budget department have yet to turn in data on collections and expenditures.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue, the biggest revenue source of the national government, was not yet ready to report on its collection performance for April. Revenue Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag said his office was still unsure whether it met its goal for the month.

The national government has set a target of reducing its budget deficit this year to only P125 billion from last year's 146.8 billion. The deficit target for this year is equal to 2.1 percent of the country's expected gross domestic product.

The DOF said the government was banking on recently implemented revenue-enhancing measures like the VAT Reform Law to help meet its fiscal target for 2006.

The VAT is estimated to generate P75 billion in incremental revenues this year alone. Of the amount, more than P40 billion has been assigned to the BOC and P30 billion to the BIR.



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Semirara sees higher sales

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SEMIRARA MINING CORP., THE COUNTRY's biggest coal producer, expects to end the year with an 18-20 percent increase in its net income despite higher tax payments, Semirara president Victor Consunji said.

Consunji said the growth would be driven by sales to new customers, such as cement firms and paper mills, and additional sales to the Calaca Power Plant 2 in Batangas, which takes in more than half of Semirara's production.

National Power Corp. shut down Calaca Power Plant 2 last year for regular maintenance check.

In the course of the repair, technical problems were encountered, delaying normal operation to the last quarter of 2005.

Nestor Dadivas, Semirara chief finance officer, also said expenses would be higher this year as it would no longer be eligible for tax incentives under net operating loss carryover (Nolco).

Nolco allows a firm to deduct losses from the taxable gross income over a specified period.

"What we are concerned about is higher taxes we are expecting to pay since our tax incentive is no longer there," Dadivas said.

Semirara had said its net profit last year went up 11 percent to P1.6 billion, from the previous year's restated net profit of P1.4 billion, buoyed by higher coal prices.

The amount translates to P5.469 in earnings per share, the company said in a statement.

In 2005, average coal prices increased 12 percent to P2,205 a metric ton from P1,974.

Revenues, on the other hand, also grew 10 percent to P5.6 billion from P5.1 billion.

Production increased to a historic level of 2.9 million metric tons of product coal, up 16 percent over the previous year's 2.5 million metric tons.

Sales volume, however, dipped slightly by 34 thousand metric tons or 1 percent to 2.48 million metric tons in 2005 from 2.513 million metric tons in 2004 largely due to the prolonged maintenance shutdown of Napocor's second coal fired power plant in Batangas.

ERC postpones open access

Competition now scheduled to start on July 1, 2007

By Abigail L. Ho

THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION has postponed for a year the start of retail competition and open access to transmission lines in Luzon to July 1, 2007.

In a notice posted on its website, the ERC said it was prompted to push back the timetable because only two of the five conditions required by the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 to open the electricity market to competition have been met so far.

The conditions are the establishment and operation of the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market, privatization of at least 70 percent of the National Power Corp.'s total capacity in Luzon and Visayas, the transfer of the remaining Napocor independent power producer contracts to IPP administrators, approval of unbundled transmission and distribution wheeling charges and the removal of cross-subsidies.

The ERC said that only the last two requirements have been fulfilled.

The new timetable for open access is scheduled for public consultation on May 16.

Under the new proposed timeline, only electricity users with an average monthly peak demand of one megawatt would be allowed to choose their own supplier.

After two years, or on July 1, 2009, the demand requirement would be brought down to 750 kilowatts (kW).

At this level, aggregators, or entities pooling the electricity requirements of a group of end-users, would be allowed to supply electricity to consumers with a total demand of at least 750 kW within a contiguous area.

By July 1, 2011, the contestable market, which refers to users allowed to choose their own suppliers, will already include end-users at the household level, "if the ERC determines as realistic."

Before the actual implementation of retail competition and open access in Luzon, the ERC will promulgate the amended Business Separation Guidelines, Code of Conduct for Retail Market Participants, Uniform Business Practices, Guidelines for the Supplier of Last Resort, Competition Rules, and Guidelines on Metering.

These rules will be circulated on or before Dec. 15.

The timetable for retail competition and open access implementation in the Visayas and Mindanao grids will be determined later, the ERC said.

BACKDOOR LISTING PLAN

Next Mobile forges ₱6.5-B swap deal

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE LONG DELAYED BACKDOOR listing of trunk radio operator Next Mobile Inc. received a shot in the arm after the company forged a share swap deal with listed firm Cashrounds Inc.

The deal, valued at P6.5 billion, will effectively give Cashrounds—an online financial deal maker—complete control of Next Mobile and make the former's stock a proxy investment vehicle for the latter.

In a telephone interview, Next Mobile chief financial officer Wilfred Racadio said the transaction was a de facto backdoor listing for his firm although both companies would maintain their corporate identities after the share swap.

"Cashrounds will end up being the parent company of Next Mobile," he said.

Racadio said that Cashrounds would end up owning 97 percent of Next Mobile's shares after the transaction.

The company official said the transaction was expected to be completed within three months, although both firms still have to get the approval of regulators.

Racadio pointed out, however, that the deal was not molded after a traditional backdoor listing exercise in the sense that no single company would emerge after the transaction.

"There will be no single surviving entity," he said. "Cashrounds will remain a listed company and Next Mobile will remain an operating company."

At the same time, he agreed that investors wanting to buy equity in Next Mobile may do so indirectly by buying listed shares of Cashrounds.

Next Mobile has long been looking for ways to list on the bourse. Before this deal, it had hoped to list on the PSE through a share swap deal with listed movie outfit Premiere Entertainment Productions Inc. (PEP).

The deal expired after both parties failed to reach an agreement on the pricing of the transaction or the ratio of the share swap.

In a disclosure filed with the PSE yesterday, Cashrounds revealed that the deal was actually sealed last April 28, 2006, where a memorandum of agreement was signed with Next Mobile and five of its controlling shareholders.

These are Top Mega Enterprises Ltd., Joycelink Holdings Ltd., Gamboa Holdings Inc., Emerald Investments Inc. and Food Camp Industries and Marketing Inc.

"It shall be a new issuance of shares of stock by Cashrounds in exchange solely for Next Mobile shares owned and controlled by [its] shareholders," the company's disclosure said.

Commodities continue to soar

From page B4

on this subject so do not write to me for advice. Go to com.oddities.

The Philex analyst briefing was well attended and all the foreign brokers were there. Chairman Walter Brown was very confident about the company's future and said that Philex had several projects lined up, which would become operational before the Padcal mine runs out in 2014.

Some could be financed from the company's strong cash flow but joint ventures with foreign partners would also be included. He forecast that net profit for 2006 would be not less than P2.3 billion. This is even higher than my P2 billion plus, which I predicted last week.

He also mentioned a small cash dividend for the year. With my subscribers holding half their PX at zero cost, I am now looking for the next hot stock but do not pressure me. Research takes time and a lot of effort.

The US economy is doing very well and the latest GPD for the first quarter is 4.8 percent, the highest figure for a first-world country. Jobs are being created at an average rate of 200,000 a month and unemployment has dropped from a high of 6.1 percent to 4.7percent. Some 25 percent of the first quarter results are out and so far, 70 percent have exceeded analysts' expectations and only 14 percent have disappointed.

Earnings are growing at 12.6 percent, year on year, and the DOW recently hit a seven-year high. Personal income and spending are increasing.

Federal Chair Bernanke indicated that the interest rate hikes are about to end. There may be one more hike in May to 5 percent but that will be all for now, unless inflation rears its ugly head. So far, it has been contained at 2 percent.

Japan, the world's second largest economy, has at last emerged from seven years of stagnation and with consumer spending now rising, the government is now forecasting growth of 2.4 percent this year and 2 percent next year.

China raised its rate by 0.27 percent and indicated that there would be another increase later in the year. It is cutting back on lending and on real estate but its manufacturing capacity is still operating at record levels.

I expect the regional boards to offer workers P30 to P40 a day, not the P70 to P125 they are demanding. The lower figure would just about cover the real value of the minimum wage, allowing for inflation. *mrbearbull@hotmail.com*

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G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	2 AQUAMARINE	3 THX MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 SENTINEL	5 THE WILD	6 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	7 SILENT HILL
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 SENTINEL	2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 GUARANTEED SEATS		
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ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3		
	3 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	4 SILENT HILL	5 AQUAMARINE	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	3 NORTH COUNTRY	4 THE DARK
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	2 AQUAMARINE		
	3 SILENT HILL	4 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	5 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	

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RPN-9 up for restructuring

Network incurs debt of up to ₱5B, more than its worth in the market

By Michelle V. Remo

THE STATE-OWNED TELEVISION station RPN-9 has incurred about P5 billion in debts, complicating government's efforts to privatize the network now that the amount of liabilities is bigger than its potential market value.

Jose A.R. Bengzon, head of the Privatization Management Office, said the government would initiate compromise talks with the TV station's creditors for possible restructuring of its liabilities.

According to Bengzon, RPN-9 owes the Bureau of Internal Revenue, several creditors—firms which RPN-9 has trading relations with—and the PMO itself.

"This is an extremely complicated privatization, and so we want to have a compromise with the parties concerned," he said in a press briefing yesterday. "What we want is that the proceeds of the sale should be able to cover the debts and retirement benefits of employees."

Bengzon said without disclosing figures that the preliminary computations by a financial adviser showed that the market value of RPN is lower than the amount of its debts.

He said the government would follow the advise of CLSA Exchange Capital Inc.—the government's financial adviser on the sale of RPN-9 and IBC-13—to offer the station for sale only after the debts have been settled to attract investors.

The government originally wanted to complete the sale of RPN-9 by the first quarter of this year. But it later conceded that the sale might not push through on schedule because of the debt problem.

Bengzon said the PMO would talk with the BIR to persuade the revenue agency to remove the penalties, interests and surcharges on top of the back taxes of RPN-9. He said the privatization of the broadcast station would push through if the BIR would agree to only collect the principal amount of the TV station's back taxes.

He said RPN-9 owed the BIR some P110 million in unpaid withholding tax and P140 million in unpaid franchise tax. He did not disclose the amount of penalties and surcharges. But other officials said these were much bigger than the principal.

Asked whether the BIR would be willing to condone the penalties on the unpaid taxes of RPN-9, BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Bunag said in the same press briefing that "it is too early to tell."

The delay of the sale of RPN-9 means that the planned privatization of IBC-13 will also have to be moved to a later date. Authorities have decided to sell IBC-13 only after the privatization of RPN-9 has been completed.

There was an earlier proposal for a joint sale of the two TV stations. But officials have been advised that the government can maximize revenue potential of the state assets if the stations are sold separately.

The television stations are included in the list of state assets up for sale under the government's revitalized privatization program.

Other assets for sale include the former International School property in Makati City, shares in Maynilad Water Services Inc., Philippine Postal Corp. and Al-Amanah Islamic Bank, among others.

More gas stations offer discounts

By Abigail L. Ho

WITH FUEL PRICES STILL ESCALATING worldwide, local oil firms have decided to add more than 100 gasoline stations offering P1 diesel discounts to public utility vehicles.

According to Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla, there are now 525 gasoline stations around the country that are offering diesel discounts—up from only 366 two weeks ago.

"We are very pleased to note that the oil companies have heeded the government's call to assist the public transport groups in light of rising fuel prices," Lotilla said in a statement yesterday.

Of the 525 stations that are offering lower priced diesel, 252 are located in Metro Manila, 118 may be found in South Luzon, 80 are situated in North Luzon, 32 are located in the Visayas and 43 may be found in Mindanao, Lotilla said.

The addition of more than 100 stations providing diesel discounts is expected to ease the burden of the public transport sector. Lotilla said that the government is still trying to find other ways to ease the impact of high pump prices on consumers. One way is the temporary reduction of import tariffs on crude and refined petroleum products.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to sign the executive order on the temporary tariff reduction before May 15, Lotilla said.

Turkey

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Turkey has achieved remarkable progress & financial stability with an average of 8% annual growth in the last three (3) years. The country's foreign trade has continuously expanded under liberal trade policies reaching a volume of US$ 190 billion at the end of 2005 with a total export volume of US$73 billion.

In relation to Turkey's initiative in 2005 for a "Trade Development Strategy Towards the Asia Pacific Countries" which has generated promising results that exceeds its average export growth rate, a Turkish trade mission of fifty (50) companies is coming to Manila to look for prospective agents, distributors and trade partners in the Philippines. The companies joining the **TRADE MISSION** will be representing four (4) major industries:

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- carpet making machine
- edge banding machine
- electrical machines and appliances and its parts and accessories
- mill processing machine
- motor vehicles, tractors, and its parts and accessories
- motors, transformer and its parts
- wood working machine

* The above is a partial list of products represented by Turkish companies during the trade mission. Interested distributors, agents, retailers and end-users may indicate specific products of interest that are not specified in the above list.

The Commercial Section of the Turkish Embassy is now arranging meetings between participating Turkish companies and interested local traders, distributors, retailers and end-users for potential business tie-ups.

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EPCIB net income up 12.5% to ₱2.7B in '05

By Doris C. Dumlao

EQUITABLE PCI BANK, THE country's third largest lender, reported an audited net income of P2.7 billion last year, 12.5 percent higher than the restated 2004 profit of P2.4 billion.

The audited figures now reflect the new International Accounting Standards, the bank said in a statement yesterday.

EPCIBank president Rene Buenaventura said the financial results were due to the able execution of the bank's strategy to pursue higher-margin middle market and consumer accounts, build up the low-cost deposit base, improve asset quality and boost non-interest income.

The bank's total interest income increased by 14 percent to P19 billion over a year ago, driven by larger earning assets and an improvement in the portfolio mix.

Interest expenses rose at a slower pace of 9 percent to P8.4 billion given an improved funding cost structure.

Net interest income reached P10.6 billion, up by 19 percent over a year ago, with net interest margin widening to 4.35 percent from 4.21 percent.

On the asset side, total resources expanded by 2 percent to P316.4 billion with aggregate investment securities increasing by 24 percent to P75.5 billion, and net loans and receivables growing by 3 percent to P142.4 billion.

On the liability side, deposits rose by 7 percent to P206.7 billion, with the deposit profile improving as low-cost demand and savings deposits increased by 9 percent and 10 percent, respectively, while high-cost time deposits declined by 2 percent.

EPCIBank set aside P2.9 billion as provision for impairment losses, even as the nonperforming loans ratio dipped to 4.5 percent from 7.01 percent.

Along with enhanced credit processes and aggressive collection efforts, the bank sold another P5.3 billion worth of nonperforming assets in September 2005, on top of the P10.5 billion in NPAs disposed in December 2004 to asset management companies.

Call center Paxys buys Australian payroll firm

By Daxim L. Lucas

PUBLICLY LISTED CALL CENTER firm Paxys Inc. has acquired complete ownership of Australia's second-largest payroll administration service provider, the company said on Tuesday.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Paxys said it had entered into a share-swap agreement for the entire capital stock of Smart Salary Pty. Ltd.

"Paxys shall acquire full ownership and control of Smart Salary for a total consideration of A$36.7 million in cash and new shares of Paxys Inc.," the call center company said.

The amount is equivalent to approximately P1.43 billion worth of cash and stock under prevailing exchange rates.

The company told the Exchange that, under the agreement, the sellers have the option to receive a portion of the purchase price in new shares of Paxys—a transaction that will depend on the stock's potential upside.

"The sellers are led by Philip John Cave, Macquarie Bank Ltd., and Michael John Briggs," Paxys said. "Assuming that the sellers shall exercise their option to take new Paxys shares, such primary issuance will not constitute 10 percent or more of the resulting expanded outstanding capital stock."

Smart Salary is Australia's second-largest "outsourced remuneration packaging administration company."

"Salary packaging administration is an Australian Taxation Office-approved means of allowing employees to effectively structure their income through a combination of cash and approved employee benefits," Paxys explained. "Smart Salary's services ensure the implementation of well-aligned salary-packaging policy and the delivery of a comprehensive tax management reporting suite."

Smart Salary operates in five Australian cities, and has generated revenues of A$10 million in the first nine months of its present fiscal year.

Recently, Paxys also acquired 15.8-percent stake in software maker Global Idealogy Corp. (GIC) for P10.4 million, with plans of buying more shares of the company in the future.

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Windows® XP Home	Windows® XP Home	256MB, 40GB HDD
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Fuji Xerox, BOMC sign accord

FUJI XEROX PHILIPpines, a wholly owned subsidiary of Fuji Xerox Asia-Pacific, recently signed an agreement with BPI Operations Management Corp (BOMC) for two continuous feed production printers in order to enhance the bank's statement printing operations.

The Fuji Xerox 495 CF Production Printers are capable of large-scale, high-speed quality printing that enables BOMC to print all of its clients' statements of account in an efficient and cost-effective method. This landmark agreement is testament to BOMC's direction to provide its customers with on-time delivery of products with the highest quality.

Shown is Romy Serrano (left), president of Fuji Xerox Philippines, together with Rogelio Santiago, president, BOMC during the signing at the BPI Intramuros office. Fuji Xerox Philippines is the industry leader in providing complete document management solutions in the country. The company also provides direct, nationwide service and support coverage for all its solution installations. The Fuji Xerox 495 CF solution in BOMC is the first installation for this specific equipment worldwide.

PNP, PCCAI MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

The Philippine National Police headed by PNP Director Gen. Arturo C. Lomibao and the Philippine Chinese Charitable Association Inc (PCCAI), owner and operator of the Chinese General Hospital and Medical Center (CGHMC), headed by its board chair and president Dr. James G. Dy, recently renewed their annual MOA signing. The PCCAI undertakes to render free medical treatment to elements of the PNP injured in the line of duty through the facilities of the CGHMC. Shown, seated from left, are Raymund Ang, Dr. Antonio P. Tecson, Chua Kee Lin, Dy, Lomibao, Gen. Vidal Querol and Sr. Supt Federico Damatac Jr. Standing from left are Loosin Yap, Robert Yang, Jayme Ang, Vic Cheng Yong, Zhou Yu Chun, Ong Yong, Simon Lee, Juancho Pacheco, James Huang, Robert Dee and Anson Yang.

NEW CERTIFYING BODY FOR HAIRDRESSING, BEAUTY CARE

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) and the Philippine International Hairdresser's Association (Piha) recently signed an agreement authorizing Piha to implement the competency and certification program for the hairdressing and beauty care industry. Tesda has accredited the first batch of graduates of the Competency Assessors Course composed of the current Piha officers. Assessors are tasked to award the Hairdressing and Beauty Care Certification based on their evaluation of a candidate's possession of the basic skills, knowledge, attitude and work values relative to a specific competency or standard set by the industry. Piha and Tesda are committed to establishing and maintaining authorized, sanitary, healthful, and professional standards for the ever-expanding and technologically advancing hairdressing and cosmetology profession. Applications for assessment and certification are open to those who have acquired practical skills and knowledge through formal/non-formal education and training, or skilled workers who have become highly competent in the craft of hairdressing and cosmetology. For more information, call Piha at 421-6582. Shown are Piha officers and pioneer graduates of Tesda's Competency Assessor's Course with Frannie Villanueva of Hairwear Creative Systems (6th from right).

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNICATIONS
LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE
East Avenue, Quezon City
E-mail Address: ltombox@lto.gov.ph • Website: www.lto.gov.ph

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 710-2006
17 April 2006
SUBJECT: Implementing Rules and Regulations of JOINT ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 03 Series of 2006

Pursuant to the provisions of Joint Administrative Order No. 03 Series of 2006, (Enforcement of Regulation on the Implementation of the NCPP on Motor Vehicles under the Revised Chemical Control Order (CCO) for Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) (DENR Administrative Order No. 2004-08, series of 2004), the following Rules and Regulations are hereby promulgated and adopted:

Section 1 - Title
These Rules and Regulations shall be known as the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Joint Administrative Order No. 03 Series of 2006.

Section 2 - Scope
These Rules and Regulations shall cover and define the roles and functions of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) and the Department of Transportation and Communication-Land Transportation Office (DOTC-LTO) in the implementation of the DAO 2004-08 known as the Revised Chemical Control Orders for Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) with particular emphasis on the pertinent provisions of Sections 4, 5, 8, 11 and 12 thereof and in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement dated 29 April 2003, particularly Section I and III, paragraph 1 and 2 and section IV thereof.

Section 3 - Administrative and Enforcement
The following Rules and Regulations shall be administered by the Land Transportation Office (LTO):
- a) All Mobile Air Conditioning (MAC) information and refrigerant type should be indicated in the MVIR. No vehicle registration transaction shall be approved without the inclusion of necessary information on MAC system.
- b) All inspectors and/or personnel concerned shall maintain a logbook for manual recording of all MACs inspected and for easy capturing of data in the report preparation.
- c) All vehicles with model 1999 up to present should have Hydro Fluorocarbon (HFC) 134a or R-134a system. Any vehicles of the abovementioned models found to have converted to R-12 should not be given registration or renewal of registration unless converted back to HFC 134a.
- d) All vehicles, 1998 models and below with R-12 MAC system as the original system will not be restricted to renew their registration. However, some vehicles of the same model with originally installed HFC 134a, should not convert their MAC to R-12, otherwise they shall be restricted to register unless converted back to HFC 134a.
- e) MAC information and refrigerant type shall be indicated in the Official Receipts (OR) of registration prior to releasing

Section 4 - Powers and Functions of the Land Transportation Office
The LTO shall
- a) Prohibit starting January 2006 the renewal of registration of all vehicles manufactured from January 1, 1999 onwards if their MAC contains CFC;
- b) Inspect all motor vehicles on their MAC Systems prior to registration, in accordance with the Manual for MAC System Inspection and Refrigerant Identification;
- c) Require all motor vehicles owners/operators applying for registration to specify in the Motor Vehicle Inspection Report (MVIR) form information on MAC systems and refrigerant types;
- d) Designate and maintain teams that will conduct random inspection of MACs in the different areas comprising its district offices and apprehend violators;
- e) Maintain records and data on refrigerant type of all motors vehicles inspected and provide such information to DENR-EMB as required.
- f) Update the DENR-EMB-POD semi-annually on the state of CFC usage in MACs;
- g) Conduct public awareness campaign in coordination with the DENR-EMB, explaining laws, rules and regulations, as well as policy statements on MAC systems;
- h) Organize trainings of MAC inspection teams in coordination with DENR-EMB. The training shall be conducted by DENR-EMB and DOLE-TESDA, and;
- i) Impose and collect all the allowable fines and penalties and recommend the filing of the necessary administrative and/or criminal actions against violators.

Section 5 - Powers and Functions of the Environmental Management Bureau-DENR
The Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) shall;
- a) Provide technical assistance and 44 units of refrigerant identifiers equipment to the LTO in the enforcement of MAC inspection;
- b) Conduct public awareness campaign in cooperation with the LTO,
- c) Conduct and organize trainings for MAC inspection teams in cooperation with the LTO, and;
- d) Enlist the assistance of the LTO in the prosecution of criminal cases against violators. For this purpose, LTO may recommend the filing of necessary criminal actions against violators

Section 6 - Conduct of Random Roadside Inspection
Random Roadside Inspection (RRI) Operational Procedure
- a) The Random Roadside Inspection (RRI) shall be conducted regularly twice every month.
- b) The RRI shall be conducted simultaneously with the conduct of anti-smoke belching activities.
- c) A minimum of twenty-five (25) vehicles should be inspected during the conduct of RRI.
- d) Proper markings such as "PASS" or "FAIL" and percentage of refrigerant shall be stamped on the OR of the inspected vehicle.
- e) Selection of vehicles to be inspected should represent the different vehicle models, classifications and types.
- f) The inspection team shall maintain a logbook for manual recording of all MAC System Inspected and for easy capturing of data in the report preparation.
- g) The deadline for the submission of inspection reports to the Central Office shall be every fifth (5th) day of the month.
- h) The RRI Team shall be composed of LTO Inspectors and EMB personnel designated by their respective Regional Directors and representative from TESDA, when necessary.

Section 7 - Training
The DOTC -LTO in cooperation with DENR-EMB shall organize continuous training for MAC inspection teams. The training shall be conducted by DENR-EMB in coordination with DOLE-TESDA.

Section 8 - Adoption of Manual
The Manual for MAC System Inspection and Refrigerant Identification prepared by the DENR-EMB is hereby adopted and made integrated part of these Rules

Section 9 - Fines and Penalties
The following penalty provisions shall apply to violators of the JAO:
1. On the first offense, owners/operators of vehicles not complying with the provisions of the JAO No. 03, Series of 2006, shall be warned and shall be ordered to immediately convert its MAC to non-CFC system.
2. On the second and succeeding offenses, if an owner/operator failed to comply with the provisions of the JAO NO. 03, a corresponding fine of PhP 10,000.00 shall be imposed, as stated in the R.A. 6969 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.
3. Prior to renewal registration, all motor vehicles that have been caught in violation of this order shall be required to present said vehicles in any EMB Regional Offices, LTO Regional Offices, and LTO MVIS, for validation purposes.

Section 10 - Separability Clause
Should any provision of these Rules be declared void or unconstitutional by a competent court, the other provisions herein shall continue to be in force and effective and shall not in any way be affected by the provision so declared void or unconstitutional

Section 11 - Repealing Clause
All other Rules and Regulations or parts of said rules and regulations that are deemed inconsistent with these Rules and Regulations are hereby revised, amended, modified and/or superseded.

Section 12 - Amendments
These Rules and Regulations may be amended and/or modified from time to time by the Department of Transportation and Communications-Land Transportation Office

Section 13 - Effectivity
These Rules and Regulations shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in at least three (3) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines

(Sgd) **ANNELI R. LONTOC**
Assistant Secretary
(PDI - May 3, 2006)

Volvo models best in interior air quality

AN INDEPENDENT SURVEY CARRIED OUT by the Ecology Center in Detroit shows that the interiors of Volvo's cars emit lower levels of toxic substances than other car makes.

The Ecology Center recently presented a study ("Toxic at Any Speed: Chemicals in Cars & the Need for Safe Alternatives") of the toxic chemicals used in building car interiors. Flame retardant PBDE and phthalates, whose main use is as a softener in plastics, were included in the study. These chemical substances can migrate from plastics and textiles, particularly at high temperatures. The car's occupants may thus be exposed to these substances, for instance through the respiratory system. Certain types of phthalates and flame retardants can, for instance, promote genetic mutations and can subject car occupants to health hazards.

The survey reveals that the concentrations of PBDE in dust and on the windscreen are up to five times higher than in the homes of most people, and since many people today spend a lot of time in their cars, car interiors thus have a significant effect on human health.

The Ecology Center carried out the survey on 11 different makes of car built between 2000 and 2005. The results show that the interiors of Volvo's cars have the lowest emissions of phthalates. There was even a lower incidence of flame retardant PBDE in Volvo's models than in most other cars, which according to the research institute makes Volvo a world leader in the area of interior air quality. The Ecology Center encourages other car manufacturers to follow Volvo's example.

"In an age when many people suffer from asthma and allergies, it is only natural for Volvo Cars to offer its customers a good environment even inside the car," comments Anders Kärrberg, Environmental Director at Volvo Cars. In order to meet Volvo's high standards, it is necessary both to use the right materials and to ensure that the air entering the car via the climate system is properly filtered. Volvo has been working for many years now on creating a clean interior climate which is also suitable for people who are particularly sensitive, such as those suffering from asthma and allergies.

"The textiles and leather used in our cars meet stringent Oeko-Tex standard 100, which ensures that fabrics and hides have been thoroughly tested to check for certain allergy-inducing substances. We also work with contact allergies and are phasing out toxic substances such as certain phthalates. Volvo's IAQS air quality system has also been developed to clean the air and reduce the risk of allergic reactions inside the car," concludes Anders Kärrberg.

The Ecology Center (EC) is an environmental protection organization based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The Ecology Center works to promote a clean and healthy environment, not least through education and the implementation of various projects.

ANDERS Kärrberg, environmental director at Volvo Cars, and the Volvo XC90 V8.

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PCU-MJCN holds medical-dental mission

THE PHILIPPINE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY-Mary Johnston College of Nursing (PCU-MJCN) will hold a whole-day medical and dental mission in Payatas, Quezon City on May 6 as part of its yearlong centennial celebration. According to PCU-MJCN Dean Edna Imperial, the activity is part of the college's corporate social responsibility of sharing basic medical and dental care to poor communities which cannot afford such services. The centennial anniversary, which culminates on February 11-17, 2007 at the Manila Hotel, bears the theme "A Century of Nursing Through God's Faithfulness." For more details, call 245-0806 or 245-0824.

ProductFILES

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IF YOU ARE MUSICALLY INCLINED experience the innovative combination of noise reduction technology and headphone audio performance with the QuietComfort 2 Acoustic Noise Cancelling headphones from Bose. These premium headphones dramatically reduce unwanted noise. Advances in Bose technology make what you want to hear sound even better.

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Based on an original design for the US military, QuietComfort headphones is an effective gadget whenever noise is a problem: on buses or trains, in the office, even at home. Bose engineers enhanced the convenience and portability features of the QuietComfort 2 headphones to make them even easier to enjoy in a variety of environments.

Whether you take them on a trip or to the office, the QuietComfort 2 headphones will fold flat to store easily in a bag or briefcase. A single detachable audio cable gives you easy access to portable players like Apple's I Pod, home stereos, and in-flight entertainment systems, all with less tangling than two-cable designs. That same cable can be removed so your headphones can go "cordless" when you simply want the benefits of noise reduction.

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Her husband, **Teopisto** (†); children **Maloy & Guilly, Marite & Otic, Marisa** (†) **& Ben** (†), **Maricar & Tony, Benjie & Carina, Tina & Bogs**; grandchildren and great grandchildren request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at the Molave Chapel, La Funeraria Paz-Sucat (inside Manila Memorial Park) Parañaque City.

Interment will be after the 8:00 a.m. Mass on Saturday, May 6, 2006 at the Manila Memorial Park.

Our Beloved Mother

MARIA GENEROSO REYES

May 27, 1919 – April 29, 2006

Peacefully joined our Creator on April 29, 2006 at the age of 86.

Her bereaved children, **Menchu & Hermie**, **Bobot**, **Henry & Precy**; grandchildren, **Daisy**, **Gilbert**, **Ramil**, **Gary**, **Vivian**, **Denise**, **Timothy**, **Madelaine**, **Andrea**, **Pocholo**, **Cj**, **Eric**, **& Eugene**; great grandchildren **Cariz**, **Kevin**, **Ram**, **Kimi & Miguel** and all her relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels
G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, May 6, 2006 at
La Loma Cemetery, Manila after the 1:00 p.m. Mass.

LORINDA M. CARLOS

(former) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Bureau of Local Government Finance
Department of Finance

Passed away to join our Creator on April 30, 2006 at the age of 73.

Her bereaved family **ROLANDO** and **OFELIA**, **CARLOS** (†) and **ELSA**, **CORA** and **ANDY**, nieces, nephews, grandnieces, grandnephews, and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies at the Mabini and Bonifacio Chapels, La Funeraria Paz-Sucat (inside Manila Memorial Park) Parañaque City.

Cremation will be on Thursday, May 4, 2006 at the Manila Memorial Park Crematory. Interment will be on Friday, May 5th at Cabanatuan City Cemetery.

CLASSIFIEDS

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES
METROBANK
ASIATRUST Bank
RCBC

Invitation to Submit Offers for the Negotiated Sale of Reynolds Assets

A consortium of banks composed of the Land Bank of the Philippines, Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company, Asiatrust Bank and RCBC Savings Bank which owns the former Reynolds manufacturing plant is now accepting offers for a negotiated sale of the buildings and equipment as one (1) lot and on pull out basis.

To qualify for evaluation by the consortium, an offer must be accompanied by a deposit of PESOS: TEN MILLION ONLY (P10,000,000.00) in cash or in Manager's Check payable to Metrobank Trust Banking, the Administrator.

Offers with the pre-qualifying deposit will be received by the Administrator at the 18th Floor, GT Tower International Building, 6813 Ayala Avenue corner HV dela Costa St., Makati City. Deadline for submission of offers and pre-qualifying deposit is on May 24, 2006 at 5:00 pm.

All unsolicited offers received by the Administrator prior to this publication will be considered for evaluation only upon payment of the required deposit. If an offer is subsequently accepted by the consortium as evidenced by a formal Notice of Award, its deposit will be applied to the purchase price. The deposit of offers not accepted by the consortium will be returned **without interest** immediately after conclusion of the evaluation.

The consortium reserves the right to reject any or all offers, to waive any formality therein, accept such offers as may be considered most advantageous or call off the acceptance of any offer and call for a new mode of disposal under amended rules. The decision of the consortium is final and binding.

(Sgd) THE EVALUATION & AWARDS COMMITTEE – REYNOLDS
(TEAC – REYNOLDS)

DISCLAIMER

The public is hereby informed that the consortium has not yet accepted any offer nor issued a Notice of Award to any buyer. Any claim to the contrary is false and misleading. Only the collective approval of the members of the consortium embodied in a formal Notice of Award shall bind the consortium in accepting an offer.

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LCR FORM 10.1 (LCRO)

Republic of the Philippines
Local Civil Registry Office
Province of Misamis Oriental
Cagayan de Oro City

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

In compliance with Section 5 of R.A. No. 9048, a notice is hereby served to the public that SALUS C. TACLINDO has filed with this Office a petition for change of first name from MARIA SALUS to SALUS in the Certificate of Live Birth of MARIA SALUS CAÑETE who was born on May 4, 1947 at San Fernando, Cebu and whose parents are MIGUEL CAÑETE and FLABIANA ORTIGA.

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition within this office not later than May 4, 2006.

(Sgd.) NORMA S. DIPUTADO
City Civil Registrar

(PDI – April 26 & May 3, 2006)

MARA PAWNSHOP I, II, III, IV AND COMEMBO BR OF MAKATI CITY AUCTION SALE ON MAY 13, 2006, SAT. AT 10:30, 11:00, 12:30, 1:30, AND 8:30 IN THE MORNING AND ON THE AFTERNOON, RESPECTIVELY, DEC. 13 - JAN. 13, 2006. SONS OF J. LANUZA AUCTIONEER.

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OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City

BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS

In Compliance with RA 7041

A. GENERAL INVESTIGATION BUREAU B
GRAFT INVESTIGATION & PROSECUTION OFFICER II - Item No. OMBA-GIO2-3-2004 SG 26; (1 Position)
Education: Bachelor of Laws; Experience: Four (4) years of experience in the practice of law, counseling, investigation/prosecution of cases, hearings of administrative/criminal cases, legal research or other related works; Training: 24 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: RA 1080(BAR)

B. GENERAL INVESTIGATION BUREAU C
GRAFT INVESTIGATION & PROSECUTION OFFICER II - Item No. OMBA-GIO2-4-2004; SG 26; (1 Position)
Education: Bachelor of Laws; Experience: Four (4) years of experience in the practice of law, counseling, investigation/prosecution of cases, hearings of administrative/criminal cases, legal research or other related works; Training: 24 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: RA 1080(BAR)

C. PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUDICATION AND MONITORING OFFICE - ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT UNIT
CLERK II - Item No. OMBA-CK2-9-1998 SG 4; (1 Position)
Education: Completion of two years studies in college; Experience: None required; Training: None required; Eligibility: CS (Subprofessional) First Level Eligibility

Applicants should submit within ten (10 calendar days from the date of this publication to the Human Resource Management Division at the above address, the following requirements:

1) A letter stating the position applied for;
2) Duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
3) 1" x 1" picture (colored)
4) * Bar/Board Rating or CSC Certificate of Eligibility;
5) * Transcript of Records;
6) * Certificates of Seminars/Training attended;
7) * Service Records or Certificates from previous/present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (If applicable)
8) * Performance Appraisal Reports for the last two rating periods (for current government employees only);
9) Statement duly signed by the applicant as to any relative(s) within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

* Where photocopies are filed, the documents must be certified as true copies by the proper authorities or the applicant may present the originals to the Human Resource Management Officer for comparison with the photocopies.

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Ifugao
Municipality of Banaue

Invitation for Bids (IFB)

Date . May 2, 2006
Contract ID No. : SP-085-IN-01
World Bank Loan No : 4446 PH

1. The Government of the Philippines has received a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development towards the cost of Local Government Finance and Development and intends to apply part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the Contract for the ***Construction of Public Market*** is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the *Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits.*
2. The ***Municipality of Banaue, Province of Ifugao*** invites sealed bids from eligible sources for the ***Construction of Public Market consists of one storey building with a total floor area of 2,304 sq.m.***
3. Bidding documents may be purchased ***starting May 3, 2006 from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.*** at the ***BAC Chairman, Office of the Municipal Engineering, Banaue, Ifugao*** upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of ***Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00)*** or its equivalent in a freely-convertible currency, for each set. Interested bidders may obtain further information at the same address.
4. Bids shall be valid for a period of ***ninety (90) days*** after bid opening and must be accompanied by security of ***Seven Hundred Thousand pesos (Php 700,000.00)*** in a form of cash, certified check, bank guarantee or its equivalent in a convertible currency, and shall be delivered to the ***SB Office, Municipal Extension Office, Tam-an, Banaue, Ifugao*** on or before ***10:00 A.M.*** on ***May 31, 2006*** at which time they will be opened in the presence of the bidders who wish to attend.
5. A pre-bid conference will be held at ***10:00 A.M.*** on ***May 16, 2006 at the Municipal Conference Hall, Banaue, Ifugao.***

(Sgd.) ANTONIO K. GAYUMA
BAC Chairman

(PDI--May 3, 2006)

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Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**

Text us your feedback: inquirer mtr name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

7-seater beast devoid of pretensions

IT'S not all heated and dried up in Oman, there are some serious river crossings.

EVER seen an SUV do a "dog leg"? Next time we'll ask it to sit and beg.

By Tessa R. Salazar

(Second of three parts)

WE PASSED BY HIEROglyphics (some authentic, some not) strewn on the walls of the rugged Wadi in Oman. The authentic cluster of the rock art could've been at least 1,500 years old. One illustration showed an Arabian Leopard pouncing on a man. We certainly weren't at the top of the food chain then.

But now we felt on top of the world on our Jeep Commanders, enjoying the view of ancient geography on our assigned respective vehicle, the first-ever three-row Jeep for seven passengers featuring a theater-style stadium seating.

The vehicle worked its way in a variety of surfaces (gravel, tarmac and loose gravel) in the Wadi. Many of us novice off-roading experts were asked to make the Commander "crawl" on two large rocks.

2 advanced 4WD systems

Thankfully, two of the most advanced 4WD systems worked in these moments of uncertainty for those who haven't done an off-roading stunt like the "dog leg" (with guidance from the experts, of course).

The Quadra Trac II, standard on the 4.7-liter basic Commander, is an active full-time system with two speeds and neutral, electronically controlled clutch pack coupling in the center of differential and open front and rear differentials. The Jeep engineers would say its torque default split variable to the front and rear is at 48/52.

The Quadra Drive II is also an active full-time system with two speeds and neutral, electronically controlled clutch pack coupling in the center of the differential. This time, however, it comes with the industry-exclusive front and rear electronic limited slip differentials. Its torque split? Its engineers say, if three wheels were slipping, 100 percent of available torque would be transferred to the tire with the most traction within a split second.

Both vehicles' operating ranges are 4WD on demand and 4WD low.

These ranges on the "trail-ready" Commander proved useful in negotiating the turbulent geological past and present of Oman, and gave us a challenging tool to get an eyeful of a fantastic landscape—a geologic "red carpet" alternately smoothed and ruffled during all those millions of years. In just half an hour, we had seen varying rock formations and driven on different terrain.

The Jeep Commander has the same 4x4 systems, suspension and powertrains as the Jeep Grand Cherokee, including an independent front suspension and rack-and-pinion steering.

Suspension and damping

The front suspension has the short/long arm independent configuration with gas-charged twin-tube coil over shock absorbers and stabilizer bar, and 22.5 cm (8.86-inch) wheel travel.

The rear has live solid axle and five-link suspension, twin upper and lower trailing tubular linking arms plus lateral track bar, coil springs, twin monotube shock absorbers, coil springs and stabilizer bars for a 22.4-cm (8.82-inch) wheel travel.

Its tight-turning diameter of 11.8 meters (38.7 feet) provides for nimble handling.

The Jeep Commander is only 37mm (1.5 inches longer than the newest Jeep Grand Cherokee) even though the former accommodates three rows of seats. No wonder, the two share the same Jeep 4x4 systems, powertrains and wheelbase (2780 mm or 109.4 inches). The Jeep Commander's approach angle is 34 degrees; the departure angle is 37 degrees.

Plunge

The enemies of electronics and sensors are basically water and heat. And there was plenty of that where we were. One overeager journalist forgot to consider some basic wading techniques during a river crossing. He plunged into the foot-deep river too hard, which caused water to flood the air cleaner at the front part of the Commander. Strong engine or not, no 4x4 with electronic system has been designed to breathe in water, and

7-SEATER/ B-11

New RAV4: same old story?

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

TOYOTA'S THIRD GENERATION RAV4 FIRST broke cover in the Philippine automotive market in January of this year. Following the footsteps of an admittedly successful previous model, one has to ask the question if the newest iteration of this soft-road, mid-sized SUV is up to the same task. Is it a worthy successor to a vehicle that has found a home in many a Filipino household?

The 2006 RAV4 enters a market segment that has every other major Japanese manufacturer in participation, with the Hyundai Tucson, the Ford Escape and the BMW X3 further international confirmation of both the importance and market acceptance of the vehicle formula. Everyone seems to want a piece of the action, as it seems as if the Filipino motorist has found a supple spot for these soft, civilized and shiny pseudo-trucks.

Warm, welcoming and friendly may describe the products in this segment, but make no mistake that the competition among the players is stiff and rather aggressive. Being the newest in the market, it is but logical that the RAV4 appears to have quite a few aces hidden in, around and about the coachwork.

Engine selection

Toyota fires its first warning shot across the bows of the competition with the inclusion of its 2.4-liter VVTi, four cylinder power-plants. For the weight and heft of the new RAV4, this chosen engine allows the vehicle some ability at acceleration without overly alarming consumption.

The beauty of this engine selection is in the what-if's, as an educated deduction will point to that fact that the current RAV4 powertrain is probably culled from its Camry stable mate. If this is actually the case, then logic will state that whatever finds itself powering Toyota's flagship four-door sedan can be implanted in the new RAV—we'll just leave the conclusion to the public's imagination. Let's just say that this writer is a firm believer that six cylinders are better than four, unless there is some sort of forced induction in the equation.

Overall esthetic design

Highlights during a walk around of the vehicle must include the new front fascia, the rear end and the general size of the package.

Overall esthetic design is something of a plus factor for this vehicle. A front quarter mug shot of the third generation vehicle will always remind you of the second version; the designs are quite similar without being exactly identical. Those seeking to make the definite distinction between the two models should look to the very end of the vehicle. In the place of the Mk.2's now ubiquitous rear lights are an interesting flared shoulder with a visually integrated lamp cluster.

Larger overall package

The new RAV4 also delivers a larger overall package to owners. While not anywhere near as large as a full-sized SUV, like Toyota's own Prado, it already seems obvious that the compact roots of the model have been shelved for the sake of utility. Unmistakably larger from the outside than the previous model, the marked difference can be found in both the passenger and cargo areas of the interior. The fit and finish of said interior is typical Toyota but they've thankfully stayed away from their usual faux wood trim at this price level. Though plastics are still in abundance, the quality and theme of the chosen material works well to hint at more luxurious interiors.

An impression of the drive and dynamics is dominated by the decent ability of the engine and of the rather taut suspension. Gentle and steady application of the throttle is all that is needed to get the RAV4 steadily and confidently to triple digit speed. The decent amount of suspension feedback works well to remind drivers of the road condition while en route to 100 kph but passengers will probably be in a plusher frame of mind—some might actually consider the RAV4's ride as stiff.

The third generation RAV4 can therefore be described as a product that has grown up, both in size and specification. It has gotten bigger and beefier in the search for a better compact SUV. No longer is this an entry-level solution. The price probably is the clearest reminder that Toyota is pointing toward a premium experience for a more discerning owner.

Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE
PROVINCIAL GENERAL SERVICES OFFICE
Provincial Capitol Building, Dipolog City
Tel. # (065) 212-3561 Telefax # (065) 212-6492

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Supply and Delivery of various Laboratory Equipment and Apparatus (Universal Testing Machine, Motorized Flow Table, Laboratory Oven, Analytical Balance and other Apparatus)

The Provincial Government of Zamboanga del Norte through the General Fund of 2006 intends to apply the following amount being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC):

1.	PR# 100(01)06-4-0998	Php	2,400,000.00
2.	PR# 100(01)06-4-0999	Php	390,000.00
3.	PR# 100(01)06-4-0997	Php	225,000.00
4.	PR# 100(01)06-4-0995	Php	150,000.00
5.	PR# 100(01)06-4-0996	Php	131,500.00

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

The Provincial Government of Zamboanga del Norte now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders of Laboratory Equipment and Apparatus. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183). Only bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine his responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

	Schedule of Activities	Date	Time
1.	Issuance of Bid Documents	May 08 to 12, 2006	
2.	Pre-Bid Conference	May 17, 2006	10:00 A.M.
3.	Opening of Bids & Eligibility Requirements	May 30, 2006	10:00 A.M.

All activities shall be held at the Provincial General Services Office, Capitol Bldg., Dipolog City, unless announced otherwise.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the Secretariat Bids and Awards Committee and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below. Bidding Documents shall be issued upon payment of a non-refundable amount of *One Thousand (Php 1,750.00) pesos*. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The Provincial Government of Zamboanga del Norte reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liabilities to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) EMMANUEL S. LADERA
BAC-Chairman
PGSO, Capitol Bldg., Dipolog City 7100
Tel. # (065) 212-9093, 212-3561
Telefax # (065) 212-6492

(PDI – April 26 & May 3, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
ZAMBOANGA CITY SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY
San Ramon, Zamboanga City

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

CONSTRUCTION OF STANDARD MANUFACTURING BUILDINGS 2 & 3
AT THE ZAMBOECOZONE FIRST INDUSTRIAL PARK

1. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA), through SARO No. D-05-07289 dated December 22, 2005 intends to apply the following sum being the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the aforesaid projects, to wit:

Construction of one (1) unit Standard Manufacturing Building 2 — P 6,552,540.27
Construction of one (1) unit Standard Manufacturing Building 3 — P 6,552,540.27

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

2. The ZCSEZA now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential Bidders to apply for eligibility for the aforesaid projects. Bidders should possess a valid PCAB license applicable to the above type and cost of the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC, and meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents. Interested Bidders must submit their LOIs and secure the Eligibility Documents upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of **Two Hundred Pesos (P200.00)** for each project. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. Only those Bidders passing the eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Documents upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of **Two Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (P 2,500.00)** for each project.

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

	Construction of One (1) Unit Standard Manufacturing Building 2	Construction of One (1) Unit Standard Manufacturing Building 3
Issuance of Eligibility Documents	April 28 - May 10, 2006	May 4 - 15, 2006
Deadline for Submission & Opening of Eligibility Documents	May 11, 2006 1:30 PM, AVR, 3rd Floor ZAMBOECOZONE Building, Z.C.	May 16, 2006 1:30 PM, AVR, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Building, Z.C.
Issuance of Bid Documents	May 11, 2006 until a day before bid opening	May 16, 2006 until a day before bid opening
Pre-Bid Conference	May 25, 2006 10:00 AM, AVR, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Building, Z.C.	May 25, 2006 10:00 AM, AVR, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Building, Z.C.
Submission, Receipt & Opening of Bids	June 6, 2006 10:00 AM, AVR, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Building, Z.C.	June 7, 2006 10:00 AM., AVR, 3rd Floor ZAMBOECOZONE Building, Z.C.

Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address and dates stated above. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any of the following form:

Form of Security	Minimum Amount in % of the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid
Cash, Certified Check, Cashiers' Check, or Manager's Check	One Percent (1%)
GSIS Surety Bond	Two and a half percent (2 1/2%)

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, only Bids from eligible Bidders will be opened. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184 a contract will only be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.
4. Completion of the Works for each project is required by 155 calendar days.
5. The ZCSEZA reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) GEORGINA PANTALEON-YU
Chairman and Administrator
Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority
Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City
(062) 992-0409, (062) 993-0209
E-mail: Ecozone_bac@yahoo.com

(PDI – April 20 & May 3, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION TO CHARGE ROYALTY FEE FOR DIRECT CONNECTION
ERC CASE NO. 2005-261MC

CENTRAL NEGROS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (CENECO),
Petitioner
-versus-
NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION (TRANSCO), DISTILLERIA DE BAGO, INC. (DBI), AND DYNASTY MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (GAISANO),
Respondents.
x- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - x

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given of the filing by Central Negros Electric Cooperative, Inc (CENECO), on August 30, 2005 of an application for the charging of royalty fees for direct connection against Distilleria de Bago, Incorporated (DBI) and Dynasty Management Development Corporation (GAISANO) and for the issuance of a Cease and Desist Order to the National Transmission Corporation (TRANSCO).

CENECO contends that it is a self-sufficient electric cooperative rendering reliable electricity to all its consumers including large power industries within its franchise area and that the act of TRANSCO of directly supplying power to DBI and GAISANO is a clear indication of lack of respect to CENECO's franchise. It asserts that to allow TRANSCO to continue extending direct connection to large industrial customers within its franchise area would ultimately affect its financial viability. CENECO argues that since it was deprived of the financial gains that would have been derived from DBI and GAISANO, it is entitled to royalty fees. It also seeks to recover damages arising from the direct connection

The Commission has set the application for hearing on May 9, 2006 (Tuesday) at nine o' clock in the morning to five o' clock in the afternoon (9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.) at the Central Negros Electric Cooperative (CENECO) Office, Gonzaga-Mabini Sts., Bacolod City, Negros Occidental.

All interested parties who may wish to comment on or oppose the said application should file their comments and/or oppositions on or before the date of hearing. Such parties who may wish to have the details of the application and who shall have manifested to the Commission their desire and intention to participate actively in the proceedings, may request that before the date of hearing, they may be furnished with copies of the application by the applicant, which is hereby directed to furnish the parties making such request with copies of the application and its attachments. Likewise, any such party may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usual office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorable **RODOLFO B. ALBANO, JR.**, Chairman, and the Honorable Commissioners **JESUS N. ALCORDO** and **ALEJANDRO Z. BARIN**, this 7th day of March, 2006 at Pasig City.

(Sgd.) MARIA TERESA A. RAMIREZ-CASTAÑEDA
Executive Director III

(PDI—April 27 & May 3, 2006)

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY WATER DISTRICT
263 Rizal Avenue, Puerto Princesa City
Tel. Nos. 433-2408, 433-5032, 433-6802
Fax No. (48) 433-6803

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Puerto Princesa City Water District through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder projects:

Name of the Project	Supply & Delivery of Lot 1-122 pcs. uPVC pipes, Lot 11-One (1) Set Gas Chlorinator 0-200PPD & One (1) Unit Gas Chlorinator Booster Pump (Centrifugal Pump) and Lot III – Two (2) pcs. Butterfly Valve
Location	Puerto Princesa City Water District Stockyard
Approved Budget for the Contract	Lot I – P768,600.00, Lot II – P331,770.00 & Lot III – P348,040.00
Delivery Period	Fifteen (15) Calendar Days from the receipt of the Notice to Proceed

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last 2 years with an amount of at least fifty percent (50%) of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bids shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	April 27, 2006 – May 8, 2006
2. Pre-Bid Conference	May 9, 2006, 1:30 P.M. PPCWD Board Room
3. Deadline for Submission of Bids	May 23, 2006, 1:30 P.M. PPCWD Board Room
4. Opening of Bids	May 23, 2006, 1:30 P.M. PPCWD Board Room

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of non-refundable amount of the following : Lot I – P1,000.00, Lot II – P 500.00 & Lot III – P 500.00

The Puerto Princesa City Water District assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved by:
(Sgd.) ENGR. VICENTE D. ABREA
PPCWD BAC Chairman

(PDI – April 26 & May 3, 2006)

The older car models theory

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

SOME PEOPLE HAVE A THEORY THAT in general, the cars assembled and sold here are older or downgraded models that are no longer saleable in the United States, Europe and Japan. Those who read car magazines published in other Asean countries notice that some new models launched in Manila have less safety features or less powerful engines than the same models sold abroad. And that at least two cars still being sold here are old models that were replaced years ago with new iterations in other Asean countries.

In a New York Times article last March, Keith Bradsher wrote that when Ford Motor Co. opened its first production line in China three years ago, it used a layout copied from the Ford factory in the Philippines to produce 20,000 sedans a year based on a small car design taken from Ford operations in India. But last winter, Ford opened a second production line next door almost identical to one of Ford's most advanced factories in Germany. The new line produces the European version of the Focus and by June, total capacity will reach 200,000 cars a year.

No basis

Since Ford Philippines also began to produce the European Focus in its Santa Rosa plant last year, the older-models-theory seems to have no basis—at least as far as Ford is concerned. The Focus replaces the Ford Lynx, which for years had been lagging behind competitors in compact car sales.

Bradsher also noted that Honda Motor was about to introduce the latest Civic in China only a few months after it went on sale in Europe, Japan and the United States. The 2006 Civic is already being assembled here (aside from the CR-V and the City) and was launched in Manila last April 3, which goes to shows that the operations of Honda Car Philippines Inc. (HCPI) are up to date.

Some truth

Just the same, there is some truth in Bradsher's observation that multinationals like GM, Volkswagen, Daimler-Chrysler, Ford, Honda, Toyota and Nissan have traditionally tried to sell older models in developing countries, shipping aging equipment from factories in their home markets that were being retooled for newer designs.

The exception is China, the world's fastest-growing car market, where fierce competition and pressure from the Chinese government have compelled the multinationals to share their latest designs, technology and manufacturing expertise with their Chinese partners. China is the only country besides Japan where Toyota assembles its Prius gasoline-electric hybrid, perhaps its most important car in a decade. Last September, VW announced that it would jointly develop a hybrid minivan with Shanghai Automotive Industry Corp. (SAIC), which means that SAIC will get to learn hybrid technology. Honda exports the Fit from China to Europe while Daimler-Chrysler plans to build small cars in China under the Dodge brand for sale in the United States.

Required

To enter China, multinationals are required by the government to form joint ventures with a few state-run companies like SAIC in which the foreign carmakers cannot have more than a 50 percent stake. Learning the business after years of working in joint ventures with General Motors and VW (producing a total of 600,000 cars last year) and after pirating Western experts, SAIC will now use the technology transfer to sell its own brand of cars in China and export them to Europe in 2007. At the same time, SAIC will continue with its profitable joint ventures with foreign partners.

SAIC has set up a wholly owned subsidiary, SAIC Motor, with no foreign partner and with a $1.25-billion investment to build research and development centers, a car assembly plant and an engine factory. SAIC acquired the rights to the designs of two Rover cars from the British MG Rover Group before the latter went bankrupt in April 2005 but SAIC will also design a wider range of models including some with hybrid engines. Two smaller Chinese carmakers—Chery Automobile Co. and Geely Holding Group—have also announced export plans, confirming the ambition of the Chinese auto industry to push into the global market as well as the domestic market with its own homegrown vehicles.

Of course, it would be silly to compare the Philippine car market, where only about 85,000 new cars are sold each year, to China's yearly sales in the millions. Nonetheless, increasing access to the Internet should expand the knowledge of interested Filipinos about the latest in cars and make them expect more from the auto industry here.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: What's a free gift? Aren't all gifts free?

* * *

E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.

A look at the new LTO

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

I HAVE TO GIVE IT TO THE LAND TRANSportation Office (LTO). In observing its 94th founding anniversary on April 26, it adopted as theme "Linking Technology and Order," aiming to become a model for good governance for other government offices.

You might not have noticed it yet but for nearly three years now, the LTO has been focusing its efforts on the kind of government agency that Filipinos can be proud of.

My LTO mole says LTO's customer care thrust has been tremendously strengthened by "linking technology and order," a strategy reaping unprecedented dividends, thanks mainly to LTO's IT partner, Stradcom Corp. Through a year-round human development training, LTO employees have been motivated to provide quality public service never seen before.

For the record, the LTO has surpassed its performance targets in 2005, thanks to the LTO-IT system.

The past year alone saw LTO handle a total of 23,341,793 transactions versus its target of 22,264,990. That amounted to P9.62 billion in revenues collected versus the target of P9.28 billion.

The government Circular 56-2005 optimizing the LTO-IT system enjoins all LTO district and regional offices to maximize the use of the IT facility and refrain from manual operation while processing transactions. Stradcom has been upgrading its main computer servers to the tune of P16.5 million to include plans to upgrade the servers of all LTO regional and district offices.

Undoubtedly, the renewed public trust in the agency's capability to provide quality service by "linking technology and order" has greatly contributed to LTO's vastly improved performance—if not lift its perennially perceived sagging image.

Today (May 3), I hope to finally encounter the LTO e-Patrol, a fully customized and air-conditioned bus equipped with computers and communications link, when I renew my driver's license. The LTO e-Patrol, in case you still don't know, was unveiled to highlight the anniversary bash of the LTO last week.

Aside from my driver's license, the bus is also capable of processing a student permit, renewing a motor vehicle registration, encoding of an alarm and apprehension on "online" mode and the settling of an alarm and apprehension concern.

Definitely the LTO e-Patrol, a joint project of DOTC/LTO and its IT partner, Stradcom, can bring public service closer to the people.

What's so good about the LTO e-Patrol is it can cater to people in far-flung areas that the regular LTO offices cannot fully serve due to geographical considerations.

In the past, some quarters have criticized the working style of LTO chief Assistant Secretary Anneli R. Lontoc. In fact, I myself had been fed with letters of complaints that, upon deeper analysis, were nothing but poison letters.

I know DOTC Secretary Larry Mendoza (no relation) to be upright and I'm sure he knows a good leader when he sees one. Nearly three years into her post, Lontoc seems to be doing fine and Primo Larry is only too happy to know about it.

Belated happy birthday, LTO!

* * *

QUOTE ME. Gas has become that expensive that we should all program our trips from hereon.

COMMANDER'S mad splash

7-seater beast devoid . . .

From page B-10

so his Jeep stalled.

After the wadi (the channel of a watercourse that is dry except during rainfall) came on-road driving, which gave this writer the chance to try both the 4.7 and 5.7 Hemi V8. Despite its larger engine size, the V8 was still on four cylinders on highways. Engineers claim it consumes less fuel than the average V8-up to 20 percent less fuel consumption compared to standard 5.7-liter engines. This is also credited to its multidisplacement system.

The Commander proved as at ease on paved road as it was in the desert.

The Commanders we used in Oman bears US-specified suspension, and which are also now available in the Philippines via distributor CATS Motors Inc. on Edsa, Greenhills. The vehicles that will be commercially available in Oman will carry European-specified suspension, which is a lot stiffer than those from the United States.

Makers of the Jeep Commander trumpet that it is a luxury SUV with more serious off-roading capabilities than its perceived SUV competitors in the Philippines. Majority of the SUVs being offered in the country are the on-road versions.

While some might fret that it isn't much of a looker, its makers counter that it does what it's supposed to do: make its owner master of his or her kingdom.

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Department of Labor and Employment
NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS COMMISSION
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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) invites all interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to submit bid proposal for SECURITY and JANITORIAL SERVICES. The approved budget in the amounts of P1,923,874.50 for Security Services and P879,972.00 for Janitorial Services are sourced from the 2006 GAA. The winning bidders shall serve for the period July 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006.

Interested parties must register by submitting registration requirements to the Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat, 6th Floor, Room No. 602, PPSTA Building No. 4, Banawe St., Quezon City, starting April 27, 2006 until May 10, 2006. Only bidders duly registered with the NLRC shall be allowed to participate in the competitive bidding activities, to wit:

ACTIVITY		DATE	TIME	VENUE
Pre-Bid Conference	Security Janitorial	May 15, 2006 May 16, 2006	1:30 p.m. 1:30 p.m.	6th Floor, NLRC Conference Room
Submission and opening of Eligibility Requirements	Security Janitorial	May 29, 2006 May 30, 2006	1:30 p.m. 1:30 p.m.	6th Floor, NLRC Conference Room
Submission and opening of Bids	Security Janitorial	June 9, 2006 June 9, 2006	9:00 a.m. 1:30 p.m.	6th Floor, NLRC Conference Room

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria IRR-A under R.A. 9184. Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Eligibility requirements shall be distributed during the Pre-Bid Conference.

Registered bidders shall submit their eligibility requirements in a sealed envelope to the NLRC Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), marked with the title "SECURITY SERVICES" OR "JANITORIAL SERVICES". The name of the bidder shall likewise be stated in capital letters.

NLRC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare a failure of bidding, refuse to award the contract, or accept the offer most advantageous to the government. It also assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate/indemnify bidders for expenses incurred in the preparation of bids. Prospective bidders are required to conform and observe the provisions of Republic Act 9184 and its implementing rules.

For inquiry, contact Atty. Aristeo B. Lastica, Jr., BAC Secretariat Head, Tel. 740-7733/ 740-7734.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. CARMEN E. TALUSAN**
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee

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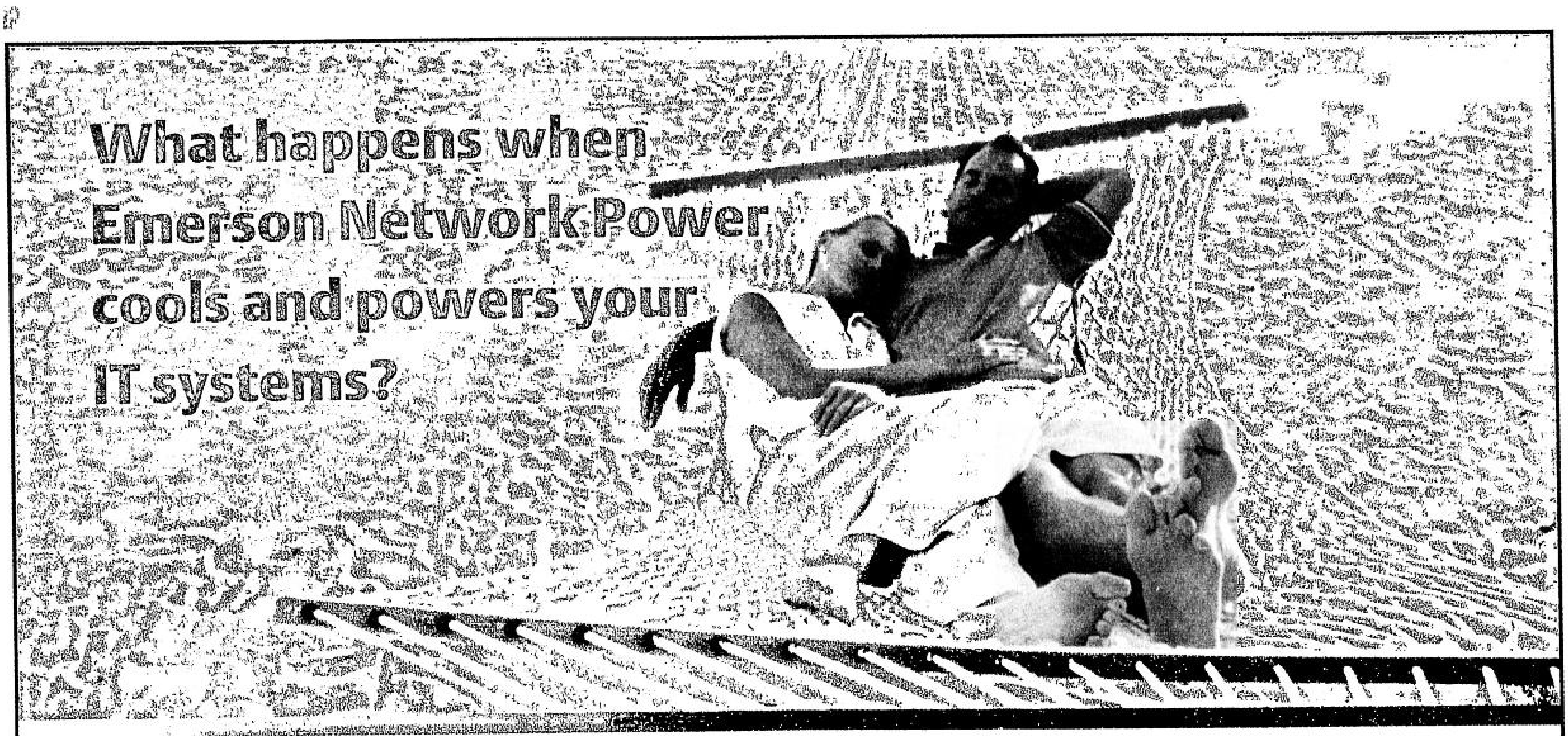
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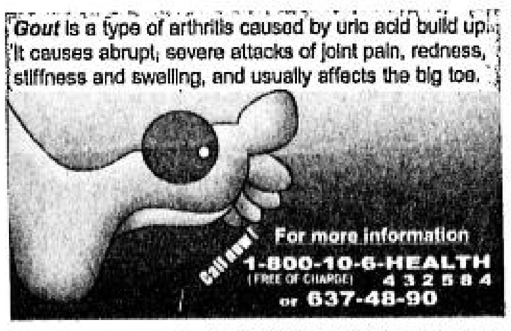
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Summer jobs

Part 1

The best thing about summer vacation? The beach, the free time, the lazy days, the freedom. The worst part? No allowance. And because we at 2bU! believe getting a little extra summer cash doesn't mean raiding mom and dad's pockets, we went out and searched for summer jobs you can apply for and we tried them out ourselves. We also gave a few internships a shot, because experience can make you even richer. In this issue, read about what it's like to become a salesgirl, an on-site premise assistant and a magazine intern. Because spending your own hard-earned cash is one of the best feelings in the world.

THE AUTHOR plays shoe saleslady for a day with the staff of Fusion Store in Glorietta.

She sells shoes

People say you should never judge others until you've walked a mile in their shoes. Well, in this case, I stood for 10 hours in theirs

By Gmeleen Faye B. Tomboc
2bU! Correspondent

WHEN I FIRST HEARD THAT I was going to be a salesperson at a Fusion store, my first thought was "This would be easy." After all, I just had to smile as a customer tried on a pair of shoes, right?

I arrived at the Fusion store in Glorietta determined to sell everything in the store. While waiting for instructions, I looked around and noticed that Fusion didn't only carry Skechers shoes. There were also Skechers bags and watches, Merrell shoes and No Fear apparel.

Ely, the store supervisor, soon asked me to pick out a pair of Skechers shoes. I hopped over happily to the display area and selected a pair of white sneakers with shiny purple lines. Edwin, one of the store crew, disappeared into the stock room and said they didn't have it in my size. I looked again and chose baby blue flats with orange details to match my orange shirt. Fortunately, it fit me perfectly.

I asked Ely where the Britney Spears posters are. She said Carrie Underwood was now the Skechers endorser. Carrie who? It took me a second to remember that she was an "American Idol" winner, at which point I realized I should start watching more TV.

Abby, another store crew, showed me around the stockroom and taught me how to find a particular size and style.

A group of Cebuano-speaking girls entered the store. One of them wandered over to the Skechers shoes. I pointed to a pair of white and pink sneakers and said in my most helpful voice, "This one's nice. It will go with your pink outfits." She smiled politely and moved on to try a pair of white thong sandals.

Abby laughed when I later narrated what I had said to the customer. Lesson No. 1: It's hard to sell a product if you don't know anything about it. So I made a more in-

SHE/ C2

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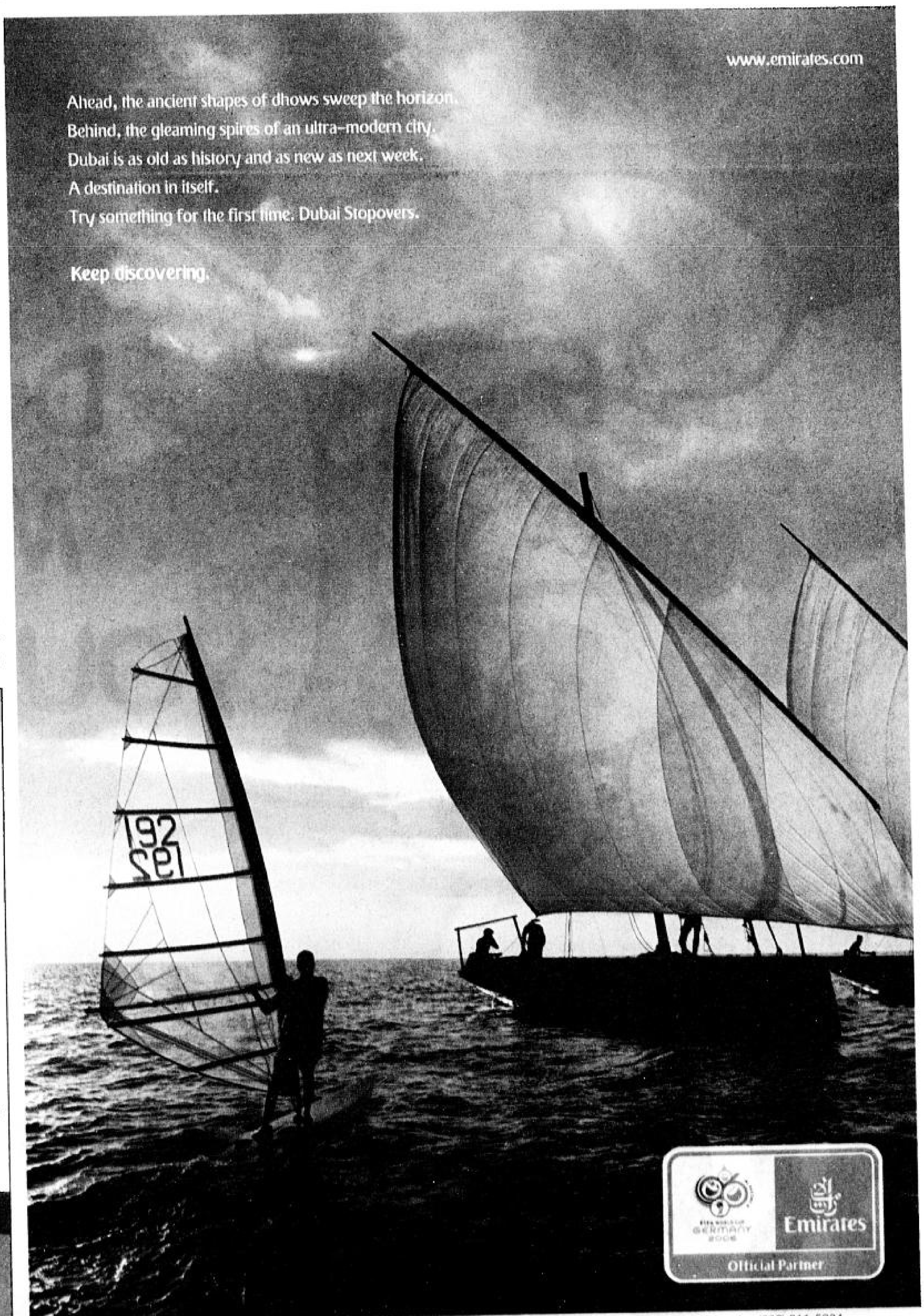
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She sells shoes

From page C1

depth tour of the store, trying to remember the special features of each product.

"Merrell shoes are really built to last," Abby said. One particular pair she pointed out could be used underwater. Then, we went over to the No Fear merchandise. Abby held up a piece of blue garter and pointed out that this was what the garter of other briefs looked like—sort of like bacon strips. In contrast, the garters of No Fear briefs always maintained their shape.

I prayed to God I wouldn't have to sell briefs, and vowed to stay in the shoes area.

My stomach started to grumble at 11:30 a.m. A *manong* passed by and sold us us rice, *miswa* and *afritada* for just P30! I snapped up one set and promptly headed to the stockroom, where I ate lunch with Abby and Edwin. I never thought I'd be able to eat at Glorietta for under P50.

Later, a couple entered the store and headed to the briefs section. Since all the other crew members were occupied with other customers, I slowly inched my way to that section. The husband asked me the difference between brief A and brief B. I was just about to ask help from fellow crew member Jerson when the husband said something about different textures. His wife told him to get two regular pairs. I suggested a tanga cut or a string type. They got a good laugh at the thought, but bought two pairs.

Mom's endorsement

Almost immediately, a mother and her teenage son came in and looked at the Skechers shoes for men. The son asked for a size 8 of a blue pair. I scurried to the stockroom, praying that I could find the right pair among the thousands of shoe boxes. Fortunately, Edwin was there doing inventory, and immediately handed me the correct size.

The pair fit the son perfectly. The guy was apprehensive about the blue color, though. The mom was reassuring, and I tried to be helpful by adding, "Blue goes very well with any pair of denim jeans."

The son asked for a different color. He finally picked out the black version, after getting his mom's approval. Lesson No. 2: When you see a mom and her son shopping, get the mom's endorsement first. The son's approval would follow.

By mid-afternoon, I'd learned how to tell if a person would buy something. Those who came in with a determined look on their faces were the ones who made purchases, as against those who merely browsed listlessly from one rack to the next. Lesson No. 3: If someone looks like he is going to buy, offer trivia about the item he's interested in. Otherwise, just stay in the background and wait for the customer to ask for assistance, since some customers detest chatty salespeople.

Then, the Cebuano-speaking girls came back. One of them asked for the white thong sandals she had tried on earlier. Lesson No. 4: Once you get the customer to fit the shoe and she likes it, your battle is half won. As long as she has extra money, she will buy it.

It was nearly closing time by 7:45 p.m., but there were still people coming in. A harried-looking 20something asked to try on a size 8 brown pair, but there was only a size 7.5. I asked the guy to try them on, anyway, and it fit. He asked for the size 7.5 of another pair. While I was on my knees adjusting the laces of the shoes, I told him Skechers shoes always came with extra shoelaces of a different color so customers could get two different looks with just one pair. He nodded, then gazed at his feet in the mirror. After a few seconds, he decided to buy the second pair.

By day's end, I was really exhausted from all that standing and scurrying. Surprisingly, the Fusion crew were still in high spirits, considering all the work they'd put in for the day. Lesson No. 5: People say you should never judge others until you've walked a mile in their shoes. Well, in this case, I stood for 10 hours in theirs. So from this day on, I vowed to be more courteous to salespeople. After all, it takes charm, wit and skills in human psychology to sell a pair of shoes worth thousands of bucks.

I bid fellow crew members Jerson, Jayson, Norma and Ely goodbye, stepped out into the darkened mall corridors and looked back at the Fusion store in a whole new light.

THE AUTHOR helps a male customer try on a pair.

LESSON NO. 3: If someone looks like she is going to buy, offer trivia about the item she's interested in.

2bU! pays tribute to mothers

TELL THE WHOLE WORLD HOW much you love your mom by becoming part of 2bU!'s special Mother's Day Scrapbook.

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E-mail your contribution to Ls_2bu@inquirer.com.ph with "Mother's Day" as the subject. The best entries will be included in our special Mother's Day scrapbook which will be published on May 10.

Fra Lippo Lippi singer back in Manila

MAKING A RETURN TRIP TO THE Philippines after a successful concert series about six years ago, Per Oystein Sorensen, the frontman for new wave duo Fra Lippo Lippi, will once again enchant Filipino fans as he performs at the Araneta Coliseum, on May 13.

Sorensen, who has been going solo since compatriot Rune Kristofferson took a break to concentrate on his label Rune Grammofon, will treat Filipino music lovers to the brand of pop-jazz that made Fra Lippo Lippi one of the most memorable figures of '80s music in the Philippines.

Presented by Cana Entertainment in association with The Ultimate Entertainment and Sutton Records, Sorensen will be performing hits that have become the soundtracks of people's lives such as the soaring ballad "Angel," the melancholic "The Distance Between Us," the easy-listening anthem "Come Summer" and the now-classic ballad "Beauty and Madness."

Sorensen's soulful voice, which for years has been the most recognizable quality of the band's music, was the catalyst in transforming Fra Lippo Lippi from a post-punk band to a reflective pop duo.

Heavily influenced by Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye, Sorensen's melodic and passionate vocal work is one of pop music's treasures.

Sorensen has fond memories of his trips to the Philippines. "I was shocked. They seemed to know all our songs by heart. I've been to Tokyo, UK, France, Germany and several other places, but we've never had that kind of attraction."

Opening the show would be local new wave rock act The Pin-Up Girls. The band, which is signed under Sutton Records, is set to wrap up production of its sophomore album "All Seats Are Taken," which will be released in Europe, Japan and the US. The all-Filipino group is also set to embark on a European tour through Sutton Records' partnership with international label Crownn Records.

Ticket prices are at P2,808, P2,247, P1,685, P899 and P450. Call Ticketnet at 9115555.

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PREVIEWING PREVIEW

Text and photos by Zee Castro

MAGAZINES ARE MY DRUG of choice. I live to get my hands on the latest issue, and enjoy the visual feasts that liven up every page. It's definitely an incurable addiction, and Preview is just one of the many magazines I subscribe to every month.

More than the luxurious clothes, countless shopping options and enticing beauty spreads, it's the bylines that grab my attention. Given the chance to join a Preview shoot, I was beyond excited because it meant working with the people who give life to the mag.

The photo shoot had a stellar cast: Pat Dy, the man behind the lens; Lois, the model; Ria, the makeup maven; Anne, the fashion ed; and Vince, the creative director.

I was present throughout the action! I was the willing intern ready to do the errands, follow orders, fold the clothes and whatnot.

Armloads

The shoot was set 10 a.m. at the Pat Dy Studio in Greenhills. To make sure I wouldn't have any horrifying intern blunders, I came in 20 minutes before call time. Anne Bella came in shortly after, lugging armloads of shopping bags and a large suitcase jampacked with clothes, accessories, and footwear that were to be used for the shoot.

I was quickly put to work. My first task was to take out all the items from the bags and boxes, and line them up so that Anne would be able to see all the options. First things to unpack: footwear! It was a treat all in itself! I carefully unearthed shoe after pretty shoe out of their packaging. I saw different ways to pack footwear: from boxes placed inside paper bags, delicate cloth pouches, standard shoe boxes with tissue sheets bunched up together, and even the plain clear plastic bag.

There were sandals, platform shoes, boots and flats. I couldn't help but ogle at the collection of pretty footwear that was before me, but I had to snap out of it, for there were even more items to unpack.

GOODIES galore!

> I was beyond excited to work with the people who give life to the mag

Anne's suitcase was filled with cotton shirts, luxe dresses, tops and pants, bags, and accessories with semiprecious stones, dog tags and tons of other trinkets. I stayed clear away from the Balenciaga garment bags though. I was afraid to let my unworthy student-on-an-allowance hands touch something so luxe and way beyond my means.

For my next task, I helped Maya, an assistant from Summit, tape the undersoles of all shoes. This was done so that the items could be returned to the shops and companies they were pulled out from in perfect condition. I was extremely careful, especially since most of the shoes would take me decades to save up for and afford!

Soon, the shoot got going. And I must say it was such a graceful dance.

Anne would thoughtfully pick out the items that would bring to life the visual concept. Then with Ria's makeup wisdom, the sweet and simple model would make a 360-degree transformation. (Sorry, no spoilers here! You'll have to watch out for the July issue of Preview to see what I mean.) When everything was set, Lois the model would take her place in front of the camera, Vince would tell her how to pose, and Pat would snap away.

Details

I learned that it pays to give attention to every detail. Vince would make a simple suggestion—a slight drop of the shoulders, the parting of the lips, a scrunch of the hair, tiptoeing to elongate the leg—and that simple thing would lead to the creation of that one perfect shot.

Once the editors were satisfied, the slate was wiped clean and a new look would be brought to life.

Halfway during the shoot, I experienced my weirdest intern moment. The next look required stick straight hair. That was a big problem since the model's hair was teased like there was no tomorrow for the earlier shot. The makeup artist almost went out of the studio to get shampoo, but we didn't have a towel and realized that shampooing and blow-drying would take such a long time.

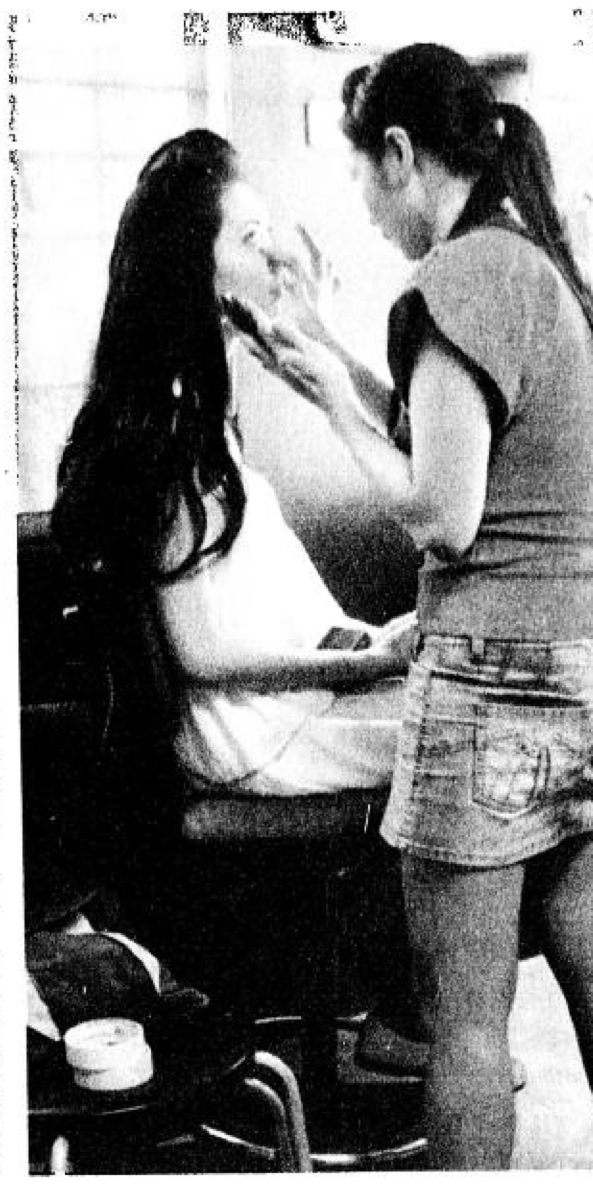
Good thing Lois remembered she had a spritzer of hair detangler. She quickly whipped that out of her bag, and the three of us spent the next 15 minutes combing her hair straight, section by section. It was such a weird sight, but we did a good job!

The team was able to create a total of four main looks, and a couple of other options as well. All throughout the six-hour shoot, I kept my eyes open, absorbing and observing how the most creative minds in the industry worked.

That was exactly why I wanted to intern at Preview: to see and be part of the goings-on behind the scenes.

As I was folding the clothes, removing the safety tape and putting the footwear back into their respective boxes, I realized that every moment I had spent in that studio was a worthwhile experience.

Months from now, when that fashion spread comes out, I will happily look at the Preview pages and be happily reminded that, even for just one day, I was part of this revered magazine.



MODEL Lois getting prepped up for the shoot

E-mail the author at zeecastro@yahoo.com

Only students seeking to fulfill curriculum requirements are qualified to apply at this time. Send resumés to gami.padillo@summit-media.com.ph or call the HR through the Summit trunkline, 6318971.

On the prowl

From page C4

going bar tour for another Maxxium beverage that we had to inspect for a short while. We hung out with Alvin and the rest of the Maxxium team, then Art and I trooped back to Makati for Celestial Night at Mezze in Greenbelt.

For this ongoing event, Maxxium was awarding the best-looking couple with two bottles of Absolut. That night, Monique and I got to present celebrities Raymond Gutierrez and Bubbles Paraiso with Mandarin and Kurant flavors.

Ad vehicles

By 12:30, I was free to go. Normally, I'd meet up with my friends for more carousing, but to my surprise, I was exhausted. While the rest of the Maxxium team were meeting up at another bar just to chill out, I had to apologetically decline the invitation as I felt I had to call it a night.

Being an on-premise associate is a lot of fun but it is certainly not a piece of cake. "We hold business meetings at 9-9:30 p.m., which isn't very common," Monique explained.

The restaurants and bars that these associates visit are like advertising vehicles for Maxxium brands, that's why public relations is at the core of their job. They have to establish good rapport with proprietors and managers. The on-premise team also makes sure these establishments do put out the Maxxium displays and bottles stipulated in the contract.

It's one of the most fun and exciting jobs ever, but it has some special requirements, like the ability to retain an amiable and positive attitude all the time. It is mandatory to get along with everyone, regardless of how difficult he or she is. In addition, girls have to watch out for men who may come on to them. And, of course, you have to maintain a lot of energy, as this "lifestyle" goes on five days a week.

"It's really more of a vocation than an occupation," Mykey said. "If you do it for the money, you won't last."

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MONIQUE and the author after having awarded Bubbles Paraiso and Raymond Gutierrez at Mezze's Celestial Night

THE AUTHOR and Mykey posing with an Absolut beer mat at Sidebar Café

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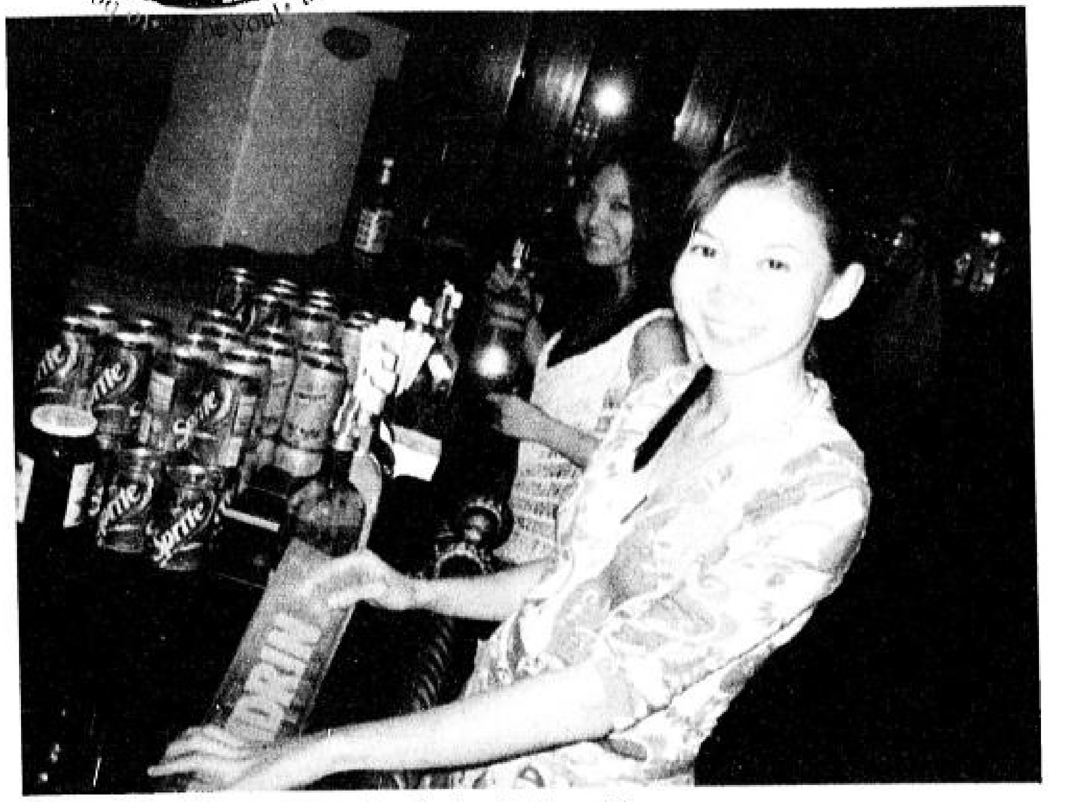
On the prowl

Checking out bars every night as an on-premise associate of Absolut is definitely fun and exciting, but it is not as easy as it sounds



KRISTIN and the author fixing the Absolut display at Jaipur

Text and Photos By Cheryl Tiu
2bUI Correspondent

THIS HAS GOT TO BE ONE OF the coolest jobs ever. Imagine clocking in at the office at 3 p.m. Your opening tasks include checking e-mails and blogging about the previous night's events. At around 5 p.m., you grab the car keys to make the rounds of your key accounts—i.e., restaurants and bars—in the city.

By midnight, your "day" officially ends. While the rest of the world enjoys after-office happy hours from 6-8 p.m. to unwind after a full day, your respite is more like an open bar. And soon enough, you're off partying the night away with the rest of the nocturnal world.

Sounds like fun? It certainly is. But it is also a lot of hard work.

Laid-back office

I had the opportunity to experience being an on-premise associate for Absolut Vodka one Friday a few weeks ago. I met my team at Maxxium, the marketing, sales and distribution arm owned by Rémy-Cointreau, The Edrington Group, Jim Beam Brands and the Vin & Spirit Group (which owns and produces Absolut).

On-premise/events manager Art Hyndman and his associates Kristin Lim, Monique Jamlang, Mykey Marquez and Alvin Degamo welcomed me to their office, which was unlike any other, as it included a bar and a pool table (how fun and laid-back!).

They explained to me the details of their work. Each of them has assigned regions around Metro Manila (and also outside of Metro Manila, but more on a monthly basis), and each night meant visiting 4-5 restaurants or bars. Accounts are classified as new, traditional, exclusive, etc., so they could gauge which of Maxxium's various brands would do well based on their target market.

For that particular night, Art and I were to visit four different regions and meet with each associate at his or her corresponding venue. My itinerary for the night looked like this:

7 p.m.—Sidebar Café, Ortigas (Mykey)
8:30 p.m.—Prince of Jaipur, Bonifacio Global City (Kristin)
11 p.m.—Packo's Grill, Quezon City (Alvin)
12 midnight—Mezze, Greenbelt (Monique)

At Sidebar Café, we met with manager Cyrus and ate, drank and conversed with him. Then Mykey showed me how to check on the Absolut bottles and beer mats. Art and I then headed over to Prince of Jaipur, where we met with Kristin and were entertained by the mesmerizing art of belly-dancing and by ever-congenial proprietor Mr. Max.

Then we headed off to Packo's Grill all the way in Quezon City, where there was an on-

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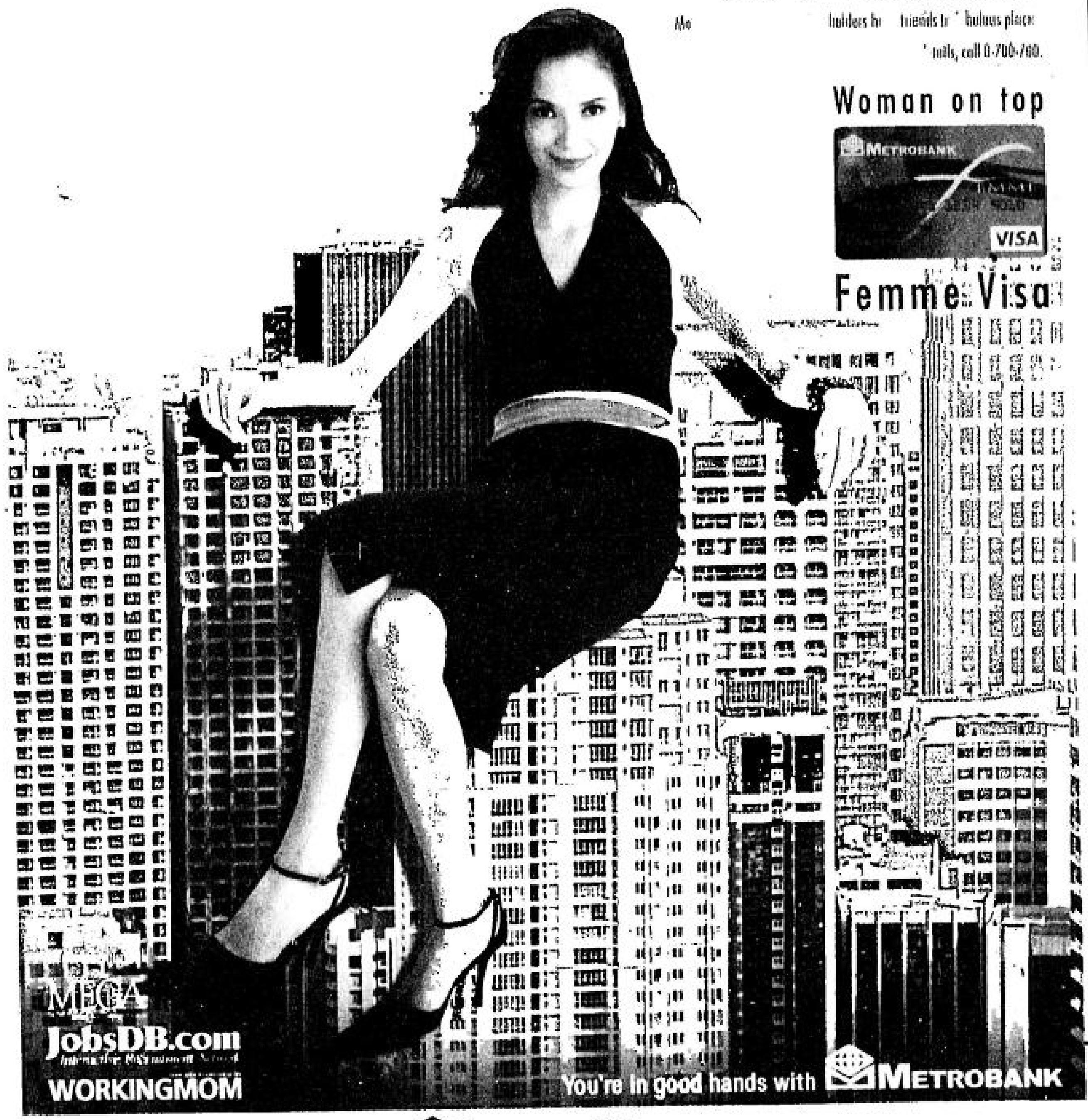

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